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"First time he kissed me, he but only kissed
The fingers of this hand wherewith I write ;
But ever since it grew more clean and white,
Slow to world greetings, quick with its 'Oh list'
When the angels speak. A ring of amethyst
I could not wear here plainer to my sight
Than that first kiss."

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

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A Good Match.



CHAPTER I.

THE CIRCLE OF A YEAR.

PHILIP was very much surprised when he heard of Mr. Stillington's visit to me, and his gift of the locket; but he was very glad to find that we had come to such an excellent mutual understanding of each other. He heard it all from me, for his guardian never said a word to him about it. But a very short time after, Messrs. Stillington, Stephenson & Co., advanced him to a higher post in their counting-house, and increased his hundred-a-year by one half; an event which he had not expected for a much longer period.

The next year of my life I will pass over

with very brief notice, for it contained very little worth recording.

On Mr. Duchesne's return from London, his visits to Crawdour were renewed; he seemed to have quite forgotten the snubbing he had received from me on the night of his ball; for he recommenced and pertinaciously continued his unwelcome courtship. But that was all I had to suffer in this matter. I was called to no more interviews with my uncle in the library, and Lady Crawdour informed me that it was arranged that matters were to be let rest for the present, until my cousin Mountiford came home; *then* the affair was to be settled decisively, one way or the other.

But though I had quite made up my mind which way it should be settled, I received Mr. Duchesne's and his daughter's attentions with a patience and decent civility now, that I had never done before,—a patience and

civility that I believe deceived Lady Crawdour into thinking that I would ultimately yield.

But I had no intention of deceiving her, no more than I had of yielding. Only, that my own mind being in a happier and pleasanter condition now, I could bear these annoyances with a patience I was quite unable to summon before, when I had nothing even to think of that was not irritating.

"You are changed, Lilla," Mrs. Thayer said to me.

"For the better, I hope."

"H—um, I hardly know; you have grown quite grave."

"Well; don't you think that is an improvement? You used to say I was too gay."

"Not too gay, but you were too fond of flirting; you know I disapproved of that."

"You did; but I am afraid I did not mind your disapproval much. However, I have very few opportunities for flirting now,

Lady Crawdour and Mr. Duchesne take care of that."

"But I don't think you would do it whether you had opportunity or not."

I didn't think I would, either, since I had given up flirting with Philip Staunton. I had never felt any inclination to flirt with any one else.

"Even your dress is altered," said Mrs. Thayer. "You always dressed in good taste, but you wear much plainer and quieter and less expensive things now than you used."

This too was true. I had begun to assimilate my attire much more to that of the curate's wife than to the modes which Lady Geraldine Landon brought from London. The lot in life I had chosen would resemble Mrs. Thayer's more nearly than that of Lord Lesham's daughter; and, with the zeal of a young convert, I had begun to mortify the spirit already in this manner.

"But I assure you I am not unhappy, Mary," I said.


"I wish you were married," said my friend, "to some nice man of suitable rank and fortune."

She as well as the rest had determined that I was to make a good match.

"As to your uncle and aunt, I have no patience with them; and I am sure it is all this worry about Mr. Duchesne that is preying on your mind."


"There is nothing preying on my mind," I said. "I am worried a good deal still, but somehow I bear it better than I used." But I did not tell my friend the true cause of the change in me. That there was a change, I saw quite as well as she did.

Other people saw it too. It generally seemed to be taken as a sign of the breaking down of my stern resolution in opposing the wishes of my uncle and aunt; and I received



many sympathetic looks and condoling words from my neighbours, with now and then one expressing disgust—from young ladies who might not have held out half as well as I had done, even had I yielded now. But Polly Bright and Dr. Jones were the only ones, I think, who made a guess at the truth: and even they guessed but half; but they had been our *vis-à-vis* at the ball at Texton. Of events too, unconnected with me, there were very few in North Longshire this year, either. Miss Giles was married to Mr. James, and everybody was at her wedding, and everybody—and all the nobodies besides, who were not there—wondered, as Mrs. Thayer and I had done, what he had seen in her. Somebody's eldest son married his sister's governess; and somebody else's youngest daughter wanted to marry a landscape painter,—whom there was not the slightest danger would turn out either a Lord of Burleigh or a Turner. Several people

died, exactly how and when they were expected to do so; and several other people had babies,—just at the proper time also; which deprived all those events of any peculiar interest whatsoever. It is only when births and deaths occur when they shouldn't, that they can yield any materials of sensationalism to a history. The governess and the landscape painter afforded us far more excitement; for there was something of a flavour of unlawfulness about them that made them very gratifying to talk about. When everybody does exactly what everybody else expects they will, there is really no opening to praise, to pity, to condemn; and, without that, conversation is very flat indeed. But we really very seldom had anything exciting to talk about in North Longshire,—we were all too good. Not but we had some failings of our own. Our men were prejudiced, and our women were bigoted; some of us were silly, and a good many of us



were proud, and we were all rather ill-natured ; but we were very respectable, and for the most part free from those vices that people shut their eyes and shake their heads over. Lord Texworth, and a young lady who had eloped with her groom, were our standard *mauvais sujets* ; but even the elopement was a five-year-old event now. So Miss Giles,—who was interesting because she disappointed us, everybody had said always she was sure to be an old maid,—being disposed of, we made as much capital as we could out of the governess and the landscape painter ; and we all soon knew that she had been pupil-teacher and general drudge in the school Miss Duchesne had been “finished” at ; and that two of her sisters had died of consumption, and her youngest brother was in the blue-coat school, while the landscape painter’s father was a scene-shifter at one of the London theatres, and his mother let lodgings in the Caledonian Road.

All the while it rather amused me to think that some time I should afford a rather similar stock topic of conversation to all my dear friends and intimate acquaintances.

And so the year went round.

CHAPTER II.

MOUNTIFORD'S RETURN.

SPRING came on again.

"I wish Mountiford could get leave," said Lady Crawdour.

It was nearly a year and a half now since he had gone away to let things take their course in his absence. The course they had taken had not been satisfactory, and his return was awaited to bring them to an agreeable conclusion. He was expected at Christmas, but did not come; and now Miss Duchesne was beginning to look cross, and her father sulky; she had said she had a cold the last time Lady Crawdour asked her to spend an afternoon with us; and Mr. Duchesne had had two conversations with my uncle in the library, from which he had not reappeared in the drawing-room.

"I wish Mountiford could get leave," said Lady Crawdour.

I rather wished he could too, as I was anxious to have "things" settled, once and for all, and be rid of Mr. Duchesne for ever ; but I did not think my cousin was particularly anxious to get it; indeed, I rather inclined to the opinion that he could get it if he would. But the latter idea I did not lay before my aunt; I only said, "Perhaps he will come soon."

"I wish he would," said Lady Crawdour; "for I don't believe one bit in Miss Duchesne's cold; and John Randolph has come down to Landon Court again!"

Lord John Randolph was a black sheep brother of Lady Lesham's.

He had been expelled from a school, and rusticated at an university. He had been before a county magistrate for cock-fighting, and before a city one for being drunk and disorderly. He had been defendant in two actions

with bill discounters (verdict for plaintiffs both times). He had been a bankrupt and a correspondent. He had spent all his own money, and as much of his relations' and friends' money as he could get them to trust him with, and some that they had not trusted him with at all ; after which event, he had been sent to New Zealand.

But neither fighting Maoris, nor any other of the amusements or pursuits of New Zealand, had suited Lord John Randolph; and he had come home again, to the great disgust of every one connected with him, for nobody knew what to do with him ; though they all agreed that something should be done with him. At last, Lady Lesham, his eldest sister, who had not spoken to him for five years, brought him down to Landon Court,—he was not a North Longshire man,—and the very next day took him with her to call at Texton.

John Randolph had now neither youth,

health, or good looks, money, wit, or reputation; his sole possession of any marketable value was the title of Lord, which the law allowed him to prefix to his name; but the worth of that in the eyes of the Duchesnes, Lady Lesham was quite aware of,—so was Lady Crawdour.

“She is a most worldly-minded woman,” said my aunt; “we all know what *her* object is,—Miss Duchesne’s fortune. I do wish Mountiford would come home.”

Perhaps about a fortnight had passed since Lord John Randolph’s second coming to London Court, during which time Miss Duchesne’s cold had not recovered at all; when one morning I got a letter from Philip.

This, as may be supposed, was no rare event. His letters had long ago filled my writing desk, work-box, and dressing-case, and overflowed into my wardrobe; they had become a little less incoherent, though not at all shorter, and

very little more grammatical; but were as agreeable to me as ever.

I took this letter in my pocket when I went out for my morning walk in the plantation. I had become so sensible now, that I was always able to allow myself to walk in the plantation every fine morning. I did now and then shed a tear or two, when I came to the spot where we dropped the violets, or where he said Good-bye; but, on the whole, I was able to conduct myself so rationally that there was no reason why I should deny myself this small indulgence.

I took the letter to read. Of course I had read it already; but these manuscripts bore re-perusal very well, indeed; I am not sure but that I enjoyed the second reading more than the first; for in the first I was always in too great a hurry to know what was in the end, to pay proper attention to the beginning or middle. As soon as I was well in the planta-

tion, I took out my letter and began to read it; and I had been reading it for about five minutes, and had got perhaps about half-way down the first page, when I felt something tickling my cheek.

It was early in the year for gnats or midges, yet I never doubted but that it was one of these intruders, and put up my hand to brush it away. I felt no insect, but I concluded it must have been there, as the tickling instantly ceased.

Again I became absorbed in my letter. Again my cheek was tickled, and again I put up my hand; but this time thrust it into something that must have been either a sweeping-brush or a whisker! I looked up, it was the latter; and at the same time my cousin's voice repeated my name, with a possessive pronoun and three superlative adjectives before it, in a sentence that I knew made the top line of the letter I was reading!

"Mountiford!" I could say no more, but crumpled up the letter in my hand, and stood looking at him, aghast. The plantation seemed fated to be a scene of surprises for me.

"Well;" said my cousin, standing still too, and folding his arms. "*You* ought to be pretty well ashamed of yourself."

I never lost my presence of mind for very long; this speech of my cousin's restored it to me at once. I smoothed out my letter.

"Ashamed of myself!" I repeated; "No, Moun'ty, I am not."

"Ain't you," said my cousin; "then you ought to be! Now, may I ask who is the impudent vagabond who wrote that letter to you?"

"It was not an impudent vagabond who wrote it at all," I said; "but the nicest fellow in the world."

"The nicest fellow in the world," my cousin repeated; "and, pray, who is he?"

"He is going to be my husband," I said,

summoning courage, and blurting it out boldly.

"The deuce he is!" said Mountiford, unfolding his arms and letting them drop by his side.

"No," I said, "I have cut *his* acquaintance long ago, Mountiford."

"Well," said my cousin, "you are the coolest hand I have ever come across. Who is this fellow? Not Duchesne, I'll swear."

"You may," I said; "you may swear that quite safely, Mountiford."

"Then, who is it? And how is it that I never heard of it before?"

"You never heard of it before, because I never chose to tell you. And you would not have heard of it now, but that you had the impertinence to look over my shoulder and read my letter."

"From which I conclude that the mother and the governor know nothing about it?"

I nodded in acquiescence.

"But, of course, Mounty, if you choose to be

ill-natured and mean and nasty, you can go and tell them now."

"Of course I can," said my cousin.

I wondered whether he intended to be,—I sincerely hoped he did not.

"Now, look here," said Mountiford; "if you don't want me to tell, and I'm sure you don't, your best plan is just to speak out at once, and make a clean breast of the whole affair to me."

Now certainly I had never contemplated making my cousin the confidant of this secret of mine, which I had never yet told to anybody; and the partial knowledge of it which he had obtained was by means which might naturally arouse my resentment against him. But thinking it over for a moment or two, I did not see that I could do anything better than accede to his proposal; for I felt convinced that if I did he would not betray me, no matter what he thought of the wisdom of my conduct; and might even, as much as lay in

his power, stand my friend. I felt convinced of this, though I knew he had entertained no scruples of conscience about revealing the secret councils of his father and Mr. Duchesne, which had been confided to him, to me; and notwithstanding also his surreptitious reading of my letter, that even did not shake my confidence in my cousin's fidelity towards me; and was so completely the conduct that from my knowledge of his character I should have expected from him, that I was scarcely angry with him for it.

So, after a little consideration—

“Well, Mounnty,” I said, “I’ll tell it all to you.”

And then I told him. Very succinctly, but very truthfully; neither concealing anything, nor trying to make anything appear at all better than it was.

“Stillington, Stephenson & Co.!” repeated my cousin, when I had concluded; “I don’t believe a word of it?”

"You don't believe a word of what?"

"That you are ever going to make such a confounded idiot of yourself."

Now, certainly, this was anything but a polite speech; Mountiford took very much after his father in his use—or abuse—of the English tongue.

"I am not going to do *that*; but yet you may believe every word I have told you, Mounty."

"I can believe," said my cousin, "that you went spooning with this young puppy, just to spite the mother, or to amuse yourself. I suppose you were dull while I was away; but I *don't* believe that you are such a born idiot as ever to really think of marrying him."

This was too aggravating.

"Dull while you were away!" I repeated, scornfully. "Do you really imagine, Mountiford, that I care a bit whether you are here or there?"

"Come," said my cousin, "don't let us

squabble, for that will do no good to either; we shall get on much better by pulling together."

"Then don't you make such remarks, Mountiford. A puppy! Oh, if you knew him!" and I pressed Mr. Stillington's locket to my bosom.

"O Lord," said my cousin; "I really can't stand this, Lilla."

"What cannot you stand?"

"Your going on like this. If it was any other girl that was such a spoon! But you—"

"A spoon!" I cried, indignantly; "you know nothing about it, Mountiford. I love him with all my heart."

"There," said my cousin, "that's the climax. Let's hear no more about it, Lilla; for really it is a little too much for me."

"I didn't want you to hear anything about it at all," I said; "but you would know it. And now I want to know,—do you intend to tell?"

"No; I don't."

“Thank you,” I said. “Not that it signifies much, for of course I would do just as I liked, no matter what they thought or said or did; but it is just as well to avoid a row as long as one can.”

“Just as well,” said Mountiford. “Now, that little matter having been explained,—it’s given me rather a shock,—disturbed pre-conceived ideas. I thought you possessed of a little more sanity than I find you are. Tell me about the other business.”

Of course I knew that by this he meant the matrimonial arrangements with Mr. and Miss Duchesne. There was not much to tell but what he knew already; but what there was I narrated,—not omitting Lord John Randolph.

“By Jove,” said Mountiford, “what a blessing that would be!”—for us he meant, not for Miss Duchesne.

“Oh no,” I said. “Poor creature! I’ve

no reason to love her; but I don't wish her so bad a fate as that."

"It would be the saving of me," said this selfish young man; "for if she chooses to have me, I must take her. I'm regularly up a tree this time, Lilla."

And then he confided to me something that I had more than suspected before,—namely, that he was deeply in debt; and that his only reason for coming home now was to try and get some money out of his father to settle his most pressing necessities.

"But if she's there still, and to be had for the asking, he'll never give me a rap! There's a position for a fellow to be in!" And my cousin put his hands deep down in his pockets, and shook his head gloomily.

I can't say that I sympathised much with my cousin. Girls accustomed to a small allowance for clothes, pocket-money, and Berlin wools, don't generally appreciate the various

modes by which a young man can manage to spend eight-hundred-a-year, and run in debt besides, as Mountiford had done. And then Philip Staunton had lived upon one-hundred-a-year, and never gone in debt at all! Mountiford would have despised him for that, but not half as much as Philip would despise my cousin for marrying Miss Duchesne; and I was of course quite inclined to think Philip in the right. He was the first young man able to live on a-hundred-a-year, and not go in debt, with whom I had ever been acquainted; and I had imbibed all sorts of new ideas from him.

Some of these ideas I actually now tried to instil into my cousin.

"For goodness' sake, Mountiford," I said, "be honest and independent! Do not marry this woman you dislike; you will do her a great wrong, and make yourself miserable for life."

"Oh, that's bosh!" said Mountiford. "I don't believe in this 'miserable-for-life' business. She's an ugly skinny thing, and a mass of conceit and vulgarity."

"O Mountiford, for shame!" I cried; "and you are thinking of marrying her." (My new ideas—but I had had a little of them always.)

"What else can I do?" said my cousin. "I've shown you that; unless somebody else will take her out of the way. And as to being honest and independent,—that's not so easy when one owes five thousand pounds, and has got nothing to pay."

"I'd, go to jail sooner, if I were a man," I said, putting up my head firmly.

My cousin burst out laughing.

"Come," he said, "that's the best thing I ever heard,—even from you."

"Oh, of course," I said, "you don't intend to do it. But what do you intend to do?"

“Ask the governor for the tin—”

“That will be an agreeable piece of business,” I said, interrupting.

“Very; don’t you wish you had to do it? Then, if he refuses, just keep quiet, and let things take their course.”

“I warn you,” I said, “that they will never take the course of my marrying Mr. Duchesne,—not even to get you his daughter’s fortune, Mountiford.”

“I’m not asking you to do it,” said my cousin; “and I don’t want you to do it. I’ll do anything myself, for I don’t pretend to fine feelings.”

“You’ve no feelings at all, I think,” I said.

“Do you, indeed?” he replied, looking at me queerly. “Well; I own they are luxuries I’ve not been accustomed to indulge myself in much. And I dare say I can swallow a bitter pill,—particularly when it’s so well gilded,—as well as any other man. But you

needn't be down on me, Lilla ; I've never wanted you to take one."

"No, indeed, you haven't ; and I'm sorry I said that, Mounty," I said penitently.

"As to the jail business," he continued, "though I would take her if I couldn't get money in any other way,—I'd be hanged, drawn, and quartered, rather than you should be made marry her father."

"O Mounty," I said, "I was very unkind to you !" I could not give him Philip's or my ideas ; but even with his own there was some good in him.

"Yes," said my cousin, "I tell you the truth. I'd rather you could hold out by yourself, and not get me into the governor's black books. But if you can't, and it comes to the point, I'll refuse her flat. There !"

"Oh, thank you, Mountiford," I said.

"Oh, yes, 'thank you, Mountiford,'" he repeated, mimicking me, "but you don't care

a rap for me now ; it's all this young cub that you have picked up with. You haven't shaken hands with me yet, or even said that you are glad to see me."

These friendly little ceremonies certainly had been overlooked between us ; but I now hastened to perform them, and to assure my cousin that I cared for him very much—which I really did,—a great many raps more than I used, long ago.

And then we went 'up together to the house, where he had not been yet. He had seen me turning into the plantation as he was going up the avenue, and had followed me unperceived,—with the results already recorded.

Lady Crowdour was in great delight to see her son. He graciously stood still for about half a minute, and allowed her to hug him ; and then said, "That's enough, mother, I'm not going to melt away. How's Rupert and

the governor?" But when he was satisfied as to the health of his favourite horse, he did not wait to hear anything about the condition of his father's liver.

"My dear boy," said Lady Crawdour, finding he was not interested in the subject, "I'm so glad you are come! You must go over to-morrow, and call at Texton. Miss Duchesne—"

"Oh, blow Miss Duchesne!" said Mountiford. "For God's sake, mother, give us a respite of her, for one day, at least."

"Mountiford! Mountiford!" said his mother.

"Yes, yes," said my cousin, impatiently. "I know it all very well; but don't bother about it now. Come, I want something to eat."

CHAPTER III.

A VISIT TO TEXTON.

BUT Mountiford did go to Texton next day.

"I've begun to twist the rope," he said, as he got into the carriage after me,—which I took to be an allusion to hanging, with an unpleasant comparison to Miss Duchesne; but his mother happily appeared not to understand it.

As we went up the avenue at Texton, we saw another carriage coming down towards us.

"Who is this?" exclaimed Lady Crawdour; "do, Mountiford, look out and see?"

My cousin, who was sitting with his back to the horses, turned round and inspected the approaching equipage.

"It's Lady Lesham," he said.

"Dear, dear," said Lady Crawdour, "how

provoking that she should have been before us! It is very easy to know what she comes here for!"


"Shocking thing fortune hunting is! ain't it, Lilla?" said my cousin, with a grin at me, which I would not notice.

The carriages passed. Lady Crawdour bent forward, and bowed and smiled and kissed her hand; the Countess of Lesham did the same; nothing could be more cordial.

"John Randolph is with her!" said Lady Crawdour; "I knew him, though he leant back as far as he could! Now, to think of that, after all the way she went on about the Duchesnes when they first came! But she can bring down her pride when she wants their money."

"Dreadfully worldly-minded woman," said Mountiford.

"But the Duchesnes can't fail to see through her," said his mother.



"Well; they would not require double magnifying glasses to do it," said my cousin; "I wonder whether they will bring them to bear upon us now."

"It's a totally different thing," said Lady Crawdour, reddening.

"Is it?" said her son.

"Why, you know it is."

"I'm afraid I was not aware."

"I do wish you would be discreet, Mountiford," said Lady Crawdour; "remember, Lilla is here."

"O Lilla, I forgot you were here," said my cousin. "I beg your pardon; I hope I didn't hurt your feelings?"

"Not in the slightest degree, I assure you."

"This jesting is most unseemly," said Lady Crawdour, angrily; seeing, at last, that her son was laughing at her.

"Indeed it is," said Mountiford, assuming

an expression of deep gloom; "Miss Duchesne is quite too serious a matter to be joked about. John Randolph looked as if he were quite ready for the axe and the basket,—and we all know there's not very much squeamishness about him."

After having beguiled the way with this cheerful conversation, we arrived at Texton Lodge.

"Now, Mountiford, my dear boy, do behave well," said Lady Crawdour, imploringly, while the footman knocked.

"What do you call behaving well?" said her son. "I'll promise not to kiss Miss Duchesne, if that's all;" and then we alighted.

"Mr. Duchesne received me with his usual objectionable *empressement*; but there was a marked difference in his daughter's reception of my cousin. She tossed her head at him, and shrugged her shoulders, and objected to forget how long he had

been away; and when reminded, laughed, and said she had not thought it had been a quarter that time; and wondered why he had cared to leave so gay and agreeable a city as Cork for stupid North Longshire, which could have "no attraction for him;" though Lord John Randolph,—who had just been calling,—said it was the pleasantest place he had ever been in; and he would like nothing better than to spend the rest of his life there!

Poor Lady Crawdour looked very uncomfortable at this by no means promising beginning; but the visit turned out, after all much better than might have been expected, from such a commencement. For Mountiford did behave well. Of course he had been perfectly aware of his mother's meaning, and knew very well that she had not been at all afraid of his taking any improper freedoms with Miss Duchesne; and he most

dutifully obeyed her request, twisting his rope with a vigour and ingenuity that I really had not expected of him,—nor she, either, I think.

When Miss Duchesne tossed her head and shrugged her shoulders, he pulled his moustache, and bent his eyes disconsolately on the carpet; when she forgot how long he had been away, he sighed, and looked at the ceiling, as if invoking the sympathy of some power up there; when she wondered at his leaving Cork, he replied, in an earnest whisper, with some remark that caused Miss Duchesne to grin,—she didn't know how to smile and blush,—as much as she was capable of doing; but when she mentioned his hated rival, he rose, walked hastily to the window and looked out,—his feelings having completely overcome him! All of which proceedings had such an excellent effect, that Miss Duchesne's heart was completely soft-

ened ; and giggling with all her old accustomed sweetness, she called Captain Crawdour back from the window to her side ; when they carried on a conversation in whispers that seemed to be of a highly gratifying nature to both parties.

And my cousin afterwards looked at her worsted-work, and inspected her drawings,—she had six in a highly-ornamented and costly portfolio. During all my acquaintance with Miss Duchesne I had never seen more than those six, nor had Mountiford ; and we had both seen those many times. And, finally, he asked her to play, and stood behind her, and turned the leaves of the music ; but she did not see him grinning at me over her head,—nor did her father or his mother ; so that Mountiford did his *devoirs* in a manner that afforded perfect satisfaction to every one. What I thought, or knew of it, was of course of no consequence to any one.

"Well, mother, aren't you fond of your son?" he said, as we drove away.

"My dear Mountiford, you could not have done better," his mother replied. "I don't think Lady Lesham need trouble herself to go to Texton again with *that* object."

"You ought to send and tell her so! Such bosom friends as you and she are, mother, you oughtn't to let the poor woman take so much trouble for nothing."

"I always felt," said Lady Crowdour, not noticing this speech, "that if you would behave as you ought, Mountiford, I could quite depend on Miss Duchesne's good sense."

Which meant, that though Lady Lesham's brother was a lord, and my cousin only to be a baronet, yet, that Mountiford possessed many counterbalancing advantages to which, in a real earnest competition for her hand and fortune between the two gentlemen, Miss

Duchesne would be wise enough to give their due weight.

"Well; I behaved like a brick to-day," said Mountiford; "confess, Lilla, you never saw more love-making compressed into an hour in your life before."

"Don't talk nonsense, Mountiford," said his mother. "Lilla, I beg you don't answer him."

Which was an unnecessary admonition to me, as I had not the slightest intention of doing it.

"Why do you call it nonsense, mother?" said my cousin. "I protest I went about it as a very serious piece of business, and am very proud of having performed it so well. Now, Duchesne made no headway at all with his obdurate fair one."

"Different people have different ways," said Lady Crawdour; "but I've no doubt Mr. Duchesne quite understands Lilla's disposition, and is perfectly satisfied with her."

"I have always tried to make him understand me," I said.

"And I'm sure he does," said Lady Crawdour, affectionately, to me; "and I have no doubt, dear, that you will both be very happy."

"Oh, certain to be," said Mountiford; "evidently they were born for each other."

"And the sooner now it is all arranged the better, I think," said Lady Crawdour.

"I think so too," I said.

"Well, dear, I have no doubt Mr. Duchesne will come over to your uncle to-morrow or next day."

I had very little doubt about it, either; and, really, I rather hoped he would.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. DUCHESNE'S WOOING.

AND my aunt's prognostications were verified. The very next day Mr. Duchesne made his appearance at Crawdour Hall. Mountiford sought me out in the morning-room, and announced the fact.

"But never say die, Lil; keep your pecker up; no whining or whimpering, but look 'em boldly in the face, and speak up with a will."

This was my cousin's mode of sustaining what courage I had, and imparting more to me for the dread encounter. And, really, though I had been so long anticipating this decisive day,—so long, that I had begun to wish it would come and be over,—and had been preparing myself for it; now that it was actually arrived, I felt,—though no whit less determined

as to what I would say and do,—some doubts as to my strength being equal to saying it and doing it in the way I would like. I felt very much afraid that I should cry.

“If you could smoke a cigar,” said Mountiford, “it would do you all the good in the world ; but I suppose you couldn’t.”

No ; I certainly could not.

“Well ; have a drop of brandy, at any rate ! I’ll get it from my flask in a moment. Nothing like that to put pluck into you.”

But this kindly offer I declined also.

“It’s worth all the *sal volatiles* and *eau-de-colognes* and red lavenders that you girls are always taking, put together,” said my good-natured cousin ; “do let me give you some, Lil.”

But I assured him that I had no intention of sustaining my fortitude by any of these ladylike stimulants, either ; and that though I might look a little frightened,—my face in

the glass over the chimneypiece was certainly rather pale,—I did not feel so at all; and that I had no doubt but I should be able to fight this battle as well as I had done all the preliminary engagements.

And I had something now to sustain me that I had not had in the first encounter,—from which, nevertheless, I had come off victorious,—but I could not speak of that to my cousin. I could not speak to him of Philip, whose existence he determinately ignored; and, in fact, in the relation he held towards me, refused to believe in. And yet, when I thought of Philip, I did not need brandy, or red lavender, or any other “pluck”-giving cordial to support my courage in refusing Mr. Duchesne.

A very few moments more passed, and then a servant came and announced that I was “wanted in the library.”

I instantly obeyed the summons. “Go

in and win," said Mountiford, patting me on the back as I left the room.

But though I had to traverse a lobby, a flight of stairs, a hall, and two passages, before reaching the library, I was not, in the time it took me, able to prepare myself for finding Mr. Duchesne alone there.

I had never yet had a completely *tête à tête* interview with him. Lady Crawdour had, on two or three occasions after his first proposal, tried to leave us alone together; but I had always followed her out of the room, and resolutely refused to return until she did. And as it had been part of the policy pursued towards me not to push me to extremities, she had always been fain to concede the point.

Now, when I found that my uncle was not in the library, I turned to leave at once,—after duly recognising Mr. Duchesne.

But this was no part of the plan.

"Stop, miss," he said ; "don't go away."

"My uncle is not here," I replied ; "I came here because I believed he wanted me."

"He does want you, but he is going to spare you to me for a few minutes first," said Mr. Duchesne ; and his tone as he spoke was less servile and more confident than formerly.

"But I want to have no conversation with you,—particularly alone ; let me pass, if you please, Mr. Duchesne ?" For he had placed himself between me and the door.

"Stop, stop," said Mr. Duchesne, closing the door behind him as he spoke ; "I want to talk to you a bit, Miss Crawdour. There's been shilly-shallying enough about this, already."

"Shilly-shallying!" I repeated, angrily ; "I've wanted none, Mr. Duchesne."

"May be not," said he ; "but there has been, all the same. Now, I think, if you'd just

listen to me, a few words between us would set it all straight and square at once."

It suddenly occurred to me that this might be the better plan, after all; that if I spoke out my mind as plainly and disagreeably as I could to Mr. Duchesne, once and for all, there might be an end to the whole thing.

I moved away from the door and sat down, folding my hands on my lap, and looking fixedly at him. He came and sat before me; but having got me into this position, Mr. Duchesne dropped the confident and somewhat bullying manner he had been using, and assumed the humble lover again;—a *rôle* that seemed much less natural to him to play than the other. After looking at each other for a few seconds, in silence,—

"Why did you want to run away from me?" he said; "and why are you always so proud and cold to me? It's cruel, miss, to a man who loves you as much as I do."

Now, in the last year, this word "love," which I had often before used lightly enough myself, had become very sacred to me ; and to hear it from the mouth of Mr. Duchesne seemed utter desecration. His attempt, too, at reproachful tenderness was a hideous burlesque that I could not stand, and determined to put a stop to it at once.

"In truth, then," I said, "because I don't like your society, Mr. Duchesne. If, however, you would refrain from forcing it on me, as you do, I would receive as much of it as our acquaintance renders necessary, with courtesy."

This was very plain and truthful speaking. Mr. Duchesne went back to his former manner immediately.

"You an' me should want to understand each other clearly about this, miss," he said; "an' that's why I wished to speak to you by yerself to-day."


"To understand each other clearly!" I repeated; "if we do not, that is quite your fault, sir, for I understand you thoroughly; and, certainly, I have tried to make you understand me. I have not disguised my feelings towards you, Mr. Duchesne, now or ever."

"That's because you don't see this matter in a right light," said Mr. Duchesne, persistently. "Now, I looked to Sir John an' the others to make it plain to you, an' square things between us; but it don't seem as they're doing it."

"Doing what?" I said; determined now to have a few very straightforward words with Mr. Duchesne, and put the "matter" in a most unmistakable "light" before him.

"Why," he replied, "about your marryin' me; to get you to see as it's just the best thing as you could do."

"That," I said, "is not in my uncle's power



to do, or in your's, or in any one else's. I have told him in your presence, Mr. Duchesne, and now I tell you yourself, that I will not marry you, now or ever! It is no use your thinking I will; or that anything that he or any one can do can ever make me. *I will not marry you.* Take that answer now, once and for all; and spare yourself further trouble, and me further annoyance, on the subject." And I rose to leave the room.

But again Mr. Duchesne placed himself in the way of my exit.

"Stop a bit," he said. But seeing I was about to disregard the request, and push past him, he caught me by the wrist, closing his fat fingers round it with a grip that was wonderfully tight, considering the flabby ture of their composition.

Any little equanimity that I may have been able to preserve heretofore, now vanished entirely.

"Mr. Duchesne!" I cried. "Let me go; instantly, sir! I will not talk with you any more. Let me go at once."

"I will if you'll jest stand still an' listen to me like a sensible girl."

"I could *make* you let me go if I chose," I said, feeling a most unladylike desire to inflict some injury on the countenance of Mr. Duchesne with my disengaged right hand; "but I'd rather do things quietly. Let me go, and say what you have to say at once, and have done with it; you are only wasting your time entirely, I tell you."

Thus adjured, Mr. Duchesne released me; but still kept himself placed as a barrier to my exit.

"You see," he said, "you haven't a right notion of this thing at all, miss."

"Yes, I have," I said. "I don't like you, and I won't marry you. That's my notion, and I think it quite the right one."

"No, it isn't," said Mr. Duchesne; "and that's jest the point. Don't be talking about liking or not liking, at all; the way I want to put it to you is this: You're a sensible girl—"

"I hope so," I said.

"Now I've took a fancy to you. I know you haven't took a fancy to me."

"No; I certainly have not," I said.

"No. So I see very plainly from the beginning; but you are a sensible girl, an' as such I speak to you. Now my idea is, that it don't much matter to a woman about fancies, one way or t'other. You say you don't like me; but, bless ye, before we'd be married a month, you'd just as soon have me as any one else. Why, there's even myself. I hadn't took no fancy to the old 'oman that's gone" (the deceased Mrs. Duchesne), "but her father was in the business before mine, an' senior partner, and hadn't chick nor child but her; so it all come to me. I never would have been the

man I am, but for doing it ; an' we jogged along together wonderful well. But women settles down easier, particularly when they get everything as they want ; and I," said Mr. Duchesne, bringing his speech up to a climax, "can give you everything as you or any other woman in the world need wish to have."

"Can you ?" I said, looking up at him.

"Yes," said Mr. Duchesne, boldly and confidently. "There ain't a finer place in the shire than Texton ; nor a handsomer house, nor grander furnished,—not my Lord Lesham's own. But you may make it as good again, if ye can, an' rig it up to suit your own fancy. An' you shall have carridges an' 'osses, as many as you want ; an' as for dresses an' jewellery, an' them like,—why, there's not a lady in the land, shall be second to you ! Come, now !"

I had not been always hitherto a very good girl, I admit ; and my religious principles were

not worth very much,—some people will think ; but yet I had some ideas of my own with regard to right and wrong, and vice and virtue, too. And according to these ideas,—very crude ones, possibly,—Mr. Duchesne, when he asked me to marry him, because he could give me all those splendours and luxuries of life, was tempting my virtue, as much as when a gentleman offers a pair of pretty earrings or a necklace to a poor seamstress or servant girl, without hinting at a wedding-ring or a licence ; and I believed that I should have been more deeply stained in soul and body if, loathing him as I did, I had so married him, though the ceremony had taken place in Westminster Abbey, with an archbishop to perform it, than if I had lived my life long through with Philip Staunton, with never a word from a priest said over us,—though I would not have done that, either.

. This may be called infidelity ; and probably

it was infidelity. And I suppose, although I went to church twice every Sunday, and had not had my faith in the Pentateuch shaken, and knew nothing of modern pernicious teaching, that I was an infidel. Certainly, if having lost all faith, or never having had any, in the religion observed and expressed by my aunt, Lady Crowdour, could make me an infidel, I was one.

I looked up at Mr. Duchesne, and said, sharply and quickly,—

“Have you done?”

“Well, a'most,” he replied. “As I said, you're a sensible girl; so if you just turn this over in your mind, an' looking at it in this light, an' not thinking nothing about fancies an' such nonsense, you'll see the rights of it, an' we'll be married as soon as can be.”

“Have you done?”

“Well, yes,” he said, “I've showed you the common sense of it; now you'll think it over for a while.”

"Not for an instant," I replied; "my answer is quite ready. Mr. Duchesne, I will not sell myself to you—for any price."

"I didn't say nothing about sellin'," said Mr. Duchesne, persuasively.

"You offered me your money, and what your money would buy, to be your wife. But I despise it as much as I despise you; and I reject both. Even if I were to be bought, Mr. Duchesne, *you* would not be the purchaser."

At last I had succeeded in impressing on him some notion of the hopelessness of his suit. The leer with which he had decked his face, changed suddenly to a scowl.

"Oh, no," he said; "looking for higher game, I see. But dooks an' earls, miss, don't grow, like blackberries, on the hedges, for young ladies to pick 'em; an' perhaps you'll be disappointed."

Now he was coming out in his true colours.

"An' as to selling you to me, yer uncle was

ready enough to do that, whatever you might be ; an' a deuced long price he wanted for you, too."

"Your insolence does not hurt me, Mr. Duchesne," I said ; which was scarcely true, for I felt very cold and pale, while looking steadily in his face. "But so far you are right, sir ; I *do* look higher than you."

"Do you ?" he said, with a malicious grin. Do you look higher than that young pauper the Thayers brought here, that you was carryin' on with last year ; eh ?"

I was not cold nor pale now.

"Mr. Duchesne," I cried, "how dare you speak to me so ? But I tell you, sir, that I could not look higher than him, for he is a gentleman ; nor could I go lower than you, for you are neither an honest nor an honourable man."

"A gentleman !" said Mr. Duchesne, scornfully ; "come, that's good. A poor beggar,

grinding at a desk from morning till night for what hardly puts bread in his mouth, or a whole coat on his back! An' will be grinding there these twenty years, if he ain't knocked off in a consumption first. But did ye think that I didn't see what was going on? That I didn't see that he was casting sheep's eyes on yer? But, really now, I thought a girl like you would have had more sense than to pick up with a pauper like him, that you'd have to work an' slave an' starve for. I didn't think, now, that you'd be such a fool as to do that, instead of marrying a man as could keep you like a queen, an' you need never wet your finger for. That's why I didn't think it worth my while to blow upon you, an' get the puppy kicked out of the place, as he deserved."

Now the first part of this speech instantly conjured up a woeful picture of my dear Philip stooping his handsome shoulders and contracting his fine chest over a dreadful ledger,

with a jet of hot burning gas over his head, and a draught from an open door on his back, —all conditions favourable to bringing him to an early grave ; and the idea roused me into a perfect fury against the cruel monster who had suggested it, that was not at all allayed by his latter words.

“ You detestable old man ! ” I cried, going close up to him, —clenching my hand, and stamping my foot with rage ; “ you horrid, wicked creature ! But do you think it would help you a bit if he never earned enough to support me ; or, if he died to-morrow. No ; for I wouldn’t marry you if I were starving in the streets. I wouldn’t marry you to save my life ; I wouldn’t marry you to save *his* even ! For I hate you ; I abhor you. I wouldn’t live in a palace, to have to see your face every day, —only that ; but I’d die the worst death that could be, rather than be your wife ! Now, are you answered ? Now, are you satisfied ? ”

And without waiting for any reply to these questions, I stepped past Mr. Duchesne, pushing him aside,—not very gently,—and opening the door, made my escape swiftly to my own room. And here,—what I had restrained myself from doing in the presence of my tormentor, though latterly with great difficulty,—I burst into tears.

Now, the next scene I have to record is not from my own personal experience, but is founded on the evidence of my cousin Mountiford, as it took place while I was crying in my bedroom.

About ten minutes after I had left the library, Mountiford was summoned to appear there. We had not met in the interval that elapsed since I fled from the presence of Mr. Duchesne, whom he now found seated in perturbed council with his father.

“The fact of it is this,” said Mr. Duchesne, as he entered, “my daughter can get another

match, if she pleases,—an' if I pleases,—as good as the captain, an' maybe, better."

"Mountiford," said his father, "you are ready to marry Miss Duchesne."

"I have said so, sir, certainly," said my cousin; "but if Miss Duchesne, or Mr. Duchesne, prefers any one else, I am—"

"I don't prefer nobody else," said Mr. Duchesne; "an' I'm willing it should be, but on the conditions I named before; but I don't see as those is being carried out."

"They rest entirely with yourself, Mr. Duchesne," said Mountiford.

"Not quite. You've heard, captain, that I wish to marry your cousin?"

"Yes," said Mountiford. "But I've heard also, Mr. Duchesne, that my cousin does not particularly wish to marry you."

"Who told you that?" said his father, angrily; "not I."

"Oh, no, sir; not you. Let me see, now;

who told me ? I declare I forget ; but somebody told me, certainly."

"Girls' whims, sir ; girls' whims," said Mr. Duchesne.

"Possibly," said Mountiford. "But you don't seem to be one of my cousin's whims, Mr. Duchesne."

The ugly scowl crept over Mr. Duchesne's face again.

"Perhaps," he said, "you think you are, Captain Crawdour?"

"Eh !" said my uncle, starting from his seat. "Mountiford ! Is this the case, sir ?"

"Is what 'the case,'" said my cousin.

"That there's any foolery going on between you and Lilla ? For, if there is, by—"

"Pray, don't excite yourself, sir," said Mountiford. "I am not a rival with Mr. Duchesne in my cousin's affections. If that assurance gives him any hope of success with her he is welcome to it, from me."

"Well," muttered his father, half apologetically; "I hardly thought you'd be likely to make such an ass of yourself."

(Sir John Crawdour was not refined in speech. I think I have mentioned this before.)

"Thank you, sir, for your good opinion," said his son.

"Your mother said something to me about it before; but I didn't believe it."

"Quite right, sir," said Mountiford.

"Now, then," said Sir John Crawdour "leaving this foolish question, Mr. Duchesne—"

"Yes," said Mr. Duchesne, "it was only a joke of mine. Lord bless you, captain, I know Miss Lilla never cared a rap for you."

Poor Mountiford! When telling me this grief, he admitted that he struck home. I was sorry, for he was trying to stand my friend.

"Well," said Sir John; "now tell us in what you consider we have not carried out our part of this compact, Mr. Duchesne?"

"You haven't helped me, as you promised. You said, Sir John, as you would do your best, an' m' lady should do her best, an' your son here should his best ; but now, at the end of the year, we're just where we was at the beginning."

"I did what you wished, Mr. Duchesne, and so did my wife ; but the girl is as obstinate a jade as ever lived !"

"What do you expect me to do Mr. Duchesne ?" said Mountiford ; "was I to talk to her of the charms of love, and picture to her fancy the pleasures of a life of connubial bliss,—with you ?"

"Don't talk nonsense, sir," said his father. "Mr. Duchesne means that as you certainly have always seemed to have more influence with the girl than any one else, you should have used it in his favour."

"But wouldn't that have been in your favour, Mr. Duchesne ?" said Mountiford. "I am sorry I neglected it ; but, you see, sentiment isn't in

my line. And I thought that it would come with more delicacy,—and point too,—from yourself?”

My cousin certainly took his revenge. Mr. Duchesne thought it wiser not to notice this thrust.

“But one thing as you might all have done,” he said. “You might have seed what was going on under yer noses, and got that young vagabond Staunton kicked out of the place.”

“You forget, Mr. Duchesne, that I have been away for more than a year. It did not go on under my nose.”

“What are you talking of? What is this?” said my uncle.

“Why; that all this time your niece has been carryin’ on a love-making with a beggarly boy that yer parson down there had staying at his house.”

“Who told you this?” said Sir John Craw-

dour, in amazement. "You must be mistaken, Mr. Duchesne ; it couldn't be."

"There's no mistake at all about it, Sir John. I saw what he was after, always ; but I thought Miss Lilla 'ud have had more sense than to have anything to say to a beggar like him ; an' as I didn't want to offend them as was friends of his, an' he went away soon, I said nothing about it, thinking it was all over. But when I taxed her with it to-day, she flew into a fury, and as good as owned that she would marry him, in spite of every one of you !"

"The impudent hussy !" exclaimed Sir John. "Why didn't I hear of this before ? Did your mother know of this, Mountiford ? Did you know of it yourself, sir ?"

"My mother has never spoken to me on the subject," my cousin replied.

"But yourself, sir ?" said Sir John ; beginning to grow suspicious of the fidelity of his son. "Did you know of it ?"

"Remember, sir, that I have been away until the other day."

"But you and Lilla have been writing letters to each other?"

"I assure you she never mentioned it in any of her letters."

"But did you hear of it since you came back?"

"Oh, yes," said Mountiford, now driven into a corner. "I heard of it since I came back."

"That she had this—this—bla—"

"This lover," said my cousin. "But most girls have, you know, sir. I was only surprised to find that she hadn't two or three."

"You are insolent," said his father. "Ring the bell, sir."

Sarah came knocking at my bedroom door. I bade her come in.

"Oh, miss, you're wanted in the library at once! Mr. Duchesne is there; an' Sir John;

he is looking awful angry ; an' Captain Croudour is there ! an' Lukins is sent for my lady."

I rose from my bed, and wiped off the traces of my tears preparatory to descending.

"Oh, miss, miss!" said Sarah, half crying, "sure you won't have nothing to say to Mr. Duchesne,—a man as the very servants can't bear the sight of."

"No fear, Sarah," I said, almost smiling at the earnestness of her partizanship ; "I dare say this is the last time Mr. Duchesne will come to the Hall to see me."

"Ah ! Miss—Miss Lilla. Oh, excuse me, miss,—but you won't give up that sweet young gentleman."

"Don't mind him, Sarah, you are not supposed to know anything about him. Remember, it would only get you into trouble."

"Oh, I don't care for nothing as they can do to me!" said Sarah, stoutly. "Joe Todd has

saved a bit of money now, an' we starts for ourselves at Easter."

"I am very glad to hear it, Sarah."

"So I don't care if they gives me notice to-morrow. An' I speaks my mind,—yes, if Mrs. Lukins herself was a list'nen' at the door—" said Sarah, raising her voice, evidently with the suspicion that my aunt's waiting-maid was lingering somewhere within earshot of our council. "An' I says as it's a sin an' a shame to treat a young lady so ; an' for a scum, that even cook said, as she see him a-comin' in from the top attic winder, as she would like to wring his neck with her own hands."

I felt sorry that it had not been in cook's power to carry out her amiable desire ; but I took the will for the deed, and felt infinitely obliged to her for her good wishes.

CHAPTER V.

A BATTLE AND A VICTORY.

AGAIN I was in the library. Facing my uncle this time, to whom Lady Crawdour was protesting innocence, ignorance, and unbelief ; while Mr. Duchesne bit his nails, and looked at me with an expression of mingled angry mortification and triumphant malice ; and Mountiford, standing behind his father's chair, made signals, unseen by the other three, that I should keep my pecker up and never say die.

“ Oh, it is quite impossible !” said Lady Crawdour. “ Indeed, Mr. Duchesne, you must be mistaken. And I'm sure I've done every earthly thing I could ; and I never heard a word about this before. I don't believe it at all ; and it couldn't go on without my knowing it. And it was only yesterday she was speaking so sensibly, saying she had quite made up her mind to

marry you, Mr. Duchesne, and expected to be so happy ; didn't you Lilla ? Speak, my dear, and relieve your uncle's mind."

"No, aunt," I replied. "I did not say that I intended to marry Mr. Duchesne, or that I ever could expect to be happy with him."

"O you deceitful girl !" cried Lady Crawdour. "O Mountiford, you heard her ?"

"No, mother !" said Mountiford ; "I didn't hear anything."

"You're a fool," said Sir John Crawdour, politely, to his wife. "It was left to you to look after her, and settle this—and you haven't done it ; and she's been playing her old game all along, and humbugging you."

"I never pretended I would marry Mr. Duchesne," I said. "I told aunt all along I wouldn't."

"Hold your tongue, you hussy," said my uncle. (Wasn't his language coarse for an English gentleman ?) "And don't speak until

you are bid. Mountiford, tell me what you know about this."

"I know nothing, sir," said my cousin. "I have never seen the young Lochinvar; and I don't particularly care if I never do. You had better apply to Mr. Duchesne; he seems to be much the best informed on the subject, as he is certainly the most interested in it amongst us; it really signifies little or nothing to me."

"Don't it?" said Mr. Duchesne. "You seem to forget, captain, that if I don't get your cousin, you don't get my daughter and eighty thousand pounds."

"I don't forget it at all," said Mountiford; and his lips seemed to add, though the words did not come forth, "Your daughter be blowed."

"O Mountiford, 'Mountiford!" said Lady Crawdour, imploringly.

"Hold your tongue, sir," said his father.

"With pleasure, sir," said Mountiford.

"But I must say, Mr. Duchesne," continued my uncle, "that you are scarcely fair or reasonable in this. Even if this girl were not to marry you, that could not make the match between my son and your daughter a less desirable one for both parties."

"May be not, for your son," said Mr. Duchesne, with an amusing grin; "but my daughter is another question. Lord John Randolph proposed for her this morning, and the answer I give him just depends on how matters are settled now betwixt Miss Lilla an' me."

"Whe-w!" said Mountiford. "O Mr. Duchesne!" cried Lady Crawdour; while my uncle banged his fist on the table, and exclaimed, "Curse it! Mr. Duchesne; you don't intend to go back of your word,—do you?"

"It ain't no going back of my word,"

said Mr. Duchesne, doggedly. "I said from the fust as I would give my consent an' the money, if your niece married me; but I never said as how I would do it, else."

"Oh, but Mr. Duchesne!" cried Lady Crawdour, "you could never think of such a thing. He's such a character!"

"He's a *lord*, m' lady," said Mr. Duchesne; "and as to character, we mustn't look too close into that with nobody," nodding significantly at my cousin Mountiford, who, if not very much worse, was certainly not at all better than a great many other young men in the world. It was well known that some years ago a gamekeeper's daughter in the neighbourhood had had a baby which she was totally unable to account for, but whose existence the public voice of the village ascribed to Sir John Crawdour's son and heir. The gamekeeper, his daughter, and the poor unaccountable baby had after-

wards emigrated, with funds,—so again said the public voice of Crawdour,—supplied from Mountiford's purse. When Mr. Duchesne nodded at my cousin, he meant—I believe, and so I am sure did they—to remind him and his mother of this little incident, and others, perhaps, of a similar nature, but known only to the conscience of my cousin Mountiford.

Though not a polite expression, my uncle had spoken the truth when he called his wife a fool. But a sound wisdom dictated his remonstrance and arguments with Mr. Duchesne.

“Come,” he said, “you’re a man of the world, Mr. Duchesne; and though I admit that you made no exact promise beyond what you have stated, I think you will see that it will be better for all parties that this match, at least, shall go on. If your daughter married Lord John Randolph, she

would be a nobleman's wife, certainly,—a distinction which my son cannot offer her,—but on the other hand, this man hasn't a penny-piece in the world, and is overwhelmed with debts and difficulties; while, though my son may require a little ready money (Moun-
tiford had evidently told his father of his debts, or Sir John suspected them), the bulk of your daughter's fortune will be safely secured, with my estates, to her children."

"That may be," said Mr. Duchesne; "but character or no character,—money or no money,—settlement or no settlement,—my daughter does not marry your son, unless your niece marries me. That's my word, Sir John, to the whole of ye; an' I don't go back of it."

My uncle was wise, but Mr. Duchesne was wiser. I have no doubt at all that he preferred my cousin to Lord John Randolph for a son-in-law, and for the reasons my uncle had enumerated; and that had I not been in the

case, he would have given an instant, unhesitating consent to the union. But he also knew that it was this match my uncle and aunt were bent upon,—not the other; and that if it could be brought about without the trouble of forcing me into that, they might be very well inclined to spare themselves any more trouble in that; having had,—poor Lady Crawdour, at least,—quite enough already in it. But by pronouncing the one absolutely and irrevocably dependent on the other, he trusted to stimulate them to further exertions.

And it had that effect.

“Oh, but,” said Lady Crawdour, looking imploringly at me, as she made a last despairing effort; “Lilla is not going to make any fuss or difficulty, Mr. Duchesne. She’s a very sensible girl. This was only some foolish flirtation she was led into,—very wrong, no doubt; but young people will be young people; and she will be steadier in future; and we will all forgive it and

forget it. Speak to your uncle now, my dear ; and say you intend to be a good girl, and obey him ; and everything will go right, and we shall be all happy and comfortable."

I shook my head, determinately, in the negative.

"Hold your tongue!" said Sir John Cawdour to his wife, seeing that she was about to speak again ; "you have muddled this business enough already. Now leave it to me." Which was hard upon the poor woman ; for she had taken twice the trouble in it that he had, and done her best ; though she was a fool.

"There's but one way left now to settle it," said Sir John Cawdour.

"Lilla, come here."

I advanced from the end of the room where I had remained since my entrance, and stood before him.

"Now," said my uncle, "I am not going to ask you any questions about this young scoun-

drel you've picked up with. I don't care who he is or what he is,—whether a crossing-sweeper, or a duke ; but there is Mr. Duchesne,” —pointing to that individual, “and I desire you to marry him. Do you intend to obey me?”

“No, uncle,” I said ; “I will not marry Mr. Duchesne.”

“You won't,” said Sir John. “Well, now, just listen to me, Miss Crawdour, while I say what I'd have said to you long ago, but for Mr. Duchesne's notions about soft measures, and ‘gaining affections,’ and bosh. Do you know how old you are?”

“Yes. I was twenty-one last October.”

“Quite accurate. Now, you are not a very learned young lady ; but I dare say you know quite enough of the laws of England to be aware that, as you are over twenty-one, you are of age, and independent of me, and that I cannot prevent your marrying any one you please?”

"I do know that," I said.

"Oh, I had no doubt of it at all. But do you know, likewise, that I have no further responsibility about you ; that I am not bound to keep you here, or maintain you one hour longer than I like ; and that if you don't obey me now—"

"Stop, sir," said Mountiford interrupting him ; "let me say one word. Drop this business of Mr. Duchesne ; she never will consent ; and it's been a wretched affair from the beginning. Then she will promise to do nothing in the other without your knowledge. He's a mere boy, sir, without a penny ; and it's a hundred to one that it ever comes to anything."

"Mountiford," said Sir John, "you are an ass. She," pointing to me, "is an impudent, obstinate hussy ; but she's the only one of the whole pack of you that's got an ounce of brains. I told you before, sir, that I don't care a dump

whom she marries, if she doesn't marry Mr. Duchesne ; and marry him she shall, or quit this house to—"

"Stop," said Mountiford, interrupting him again ; "I must say one word more. It is no use driving Lilla to extremities ; for I will not marry Miss Duchesne, under any circumstances whatsoever, now."

"What do you mean by this, sir?" cried his father, starting from his seat. "What fresh insolence is this?" While Lady Crawdour clasped her hands, and exclaimed, "O Mountiford, Mountiford !" And the evil frown more deeply overspread Mr. Duchesne's face as he muttered something about "a new dodge."

"I mean what I say," said my cousin. "I was willing to marry Miss Duchesne, if it could be done by fair means ; but these are not fair. A consent wrung from Lilla by threats—"

"No threats will wring a consent from me, Mounty."

“—will be useless for me, now ; and it will be equally useless to punish her for not consenting. I will not marry Miss Duchesne.”

“Threats !” shouted his father. “By George, they are no threats ; and she’ll gain nothing by your backing up her insolent rebellion ! Lilla, you’ll tell me before twelve o’clock to-morrow that you’ll marry Mr. Duchesne ; or you’ll leave this house, never to cross the threshold of the door again !”

I knew that this was coming ; I had expected it. When my uncle asked me how old I was, I knew what was to follow ; and yet, now that it was arrived, my blood turned cold in my veins, and my heart stopped beating, and my pulses grew still, with the shock of an unprepared-for calamity.

Under the circumstances, the most natural thing for me to have done, I suppose, would have been to throw myself at my uncle’s feet, with clasped hands, and streaming eyes, and

implore him to be merciful and visit my disobedience with some lighter punishment.

But I did not. I stood still before Sir John Crawdour, looking pale, I have no doubt, and feeling very trembling ; but dry-eyed and able to say, with steady though low voice,—

“ Very well, uncle. May I leave the room now ? ”

“ Yes ; leave it as soon as you like ; and don’t let us see your face until twelve o’clock to-morrow. And be prepared then to say ‘ Yes ’ to my commands, or to march. That’s all ; be off with you.”

And obeying which kind permission, without another word or look at any one in it, I left the room.

I intended to go straight to my own chamber, as I had done before ; but half-way up the stairs I stopped, for my feet had become suddenly weak and refused to carry me further, and I had to hold the bannister

for support. Then the controlling force I had exercised over myself gave way all at once; and bending my face down till it rested on the handrail, I burst into a flood of tears.

It was thus my cousin found me. He too had received permission to depart almost immediately after I did; and he followed me at once.

“Lilla, don’t cry; don’t vex yourself. This will all come to nothing; it is only a flash in the pan, just done to give you a fright, that’s all.” Thus Mountiford tried to reassure me.”

“He means it, he does; and I don’t care. I hate him now, almost as much as I do Mr. Duchesne; and he may turn me out. I’ll beg,—I’ll starve,—I’ll die; but *I’ll never give in!*”

““Turn you out!” Nonsense; he’ll not do anything of the kind. You just go up to your room, and stay there quietly till to-

morrow morning. Sarah can bring you everything you want; and in the meantime I'll talk him up a bit. I'm afraid I pitched it into him a little too hard that time; but I'll try another tack now: eat humble pie; say you are very sorry for everything,—you can be sorry, you know, without giving in;—you'll never do it again; and all that sort of thing."

"I'll not give up Philip; it's no use asking me, Mounty."

"Who's asking you?" said my cousin, testily. "Who wants you to give him up? It's not giving him up to say that you are sorry; is it?"

"But I'm not sorry,—about him."

"You women are the most unreasonable lot! You argue and quibble about nothing at all! There, just go up to your room and leave it all to me. Stop, I'll help you; you seem rather shaky upon your pins."

And then, with the support of my cousin's arm, I reached my chamber. He sent Sarah to me soon afterwards with some brandy, and a strong recommendation to me to take it; but I didn't, and I sent Sarah,—who wanted to minister to my woes and weakness, as she had done on other occasions,—away; so that I should be alone to think.

I had a good deal to think of. I did not believe with my cousin that his father's intimation was a mere empty threat,—a “flash in the pan;” but I believed that he really meant it, and intended to carry it out. But even if he did not, how, after it, could I bear to stay in his house and eat his bread and be given money by him to buy my clothes? Very grudgingly always had the latter been bestowed upon me; but girls don't feel these things much; if I had been his own daughter he would have grudged it to me as he did, in a lesser degree, to his wife and son. But

now all this was changed ; he had spoken of his power to turn me out upon the world,—he had said he would do it. Even if he yielded to my cousin's solicitations and revoked the sentence, could I stay, a beggar upon his bounty ?

A short time ago I had no conception of any life for myself beyond North Longshire and the existence I passed in it ; or, at least, if I contemplated the possibility of any other it was only one with just so much difference as being perhaps in another county of England, being Mrs. instead of Miss, and having a horse, carriage, and card-case of my own, with licence to wear *moiré antique*, diamonds, and a cashmere shawl,—made. Had my ideas remained so limited, I suppose I should have gone down at once to my uncle, after Mr. Duchesne had left, and with tears and supplications have entreated him to let me remain at Crawdour ; and if he had proved

obdurate, would have stayed until I was thrust forth, and then laid down in hysterics on the doorstep. I might even, perhaps,—but I scarcely think I was weak enough for that, I had too much of my uncle's determination in me,—have given in, and a month hence have marched, shuddering, in white grosgrain and orange blossoms, to the sacrificial altar of the parish church.

But I had not the slightest intention of doing any of these things now ; yet if I would not, what was I to do ?

I sat and pondered this question in much doubt and perplexity ; and really it was a very serious one, and most difficult for me to answer. Sarah brought me up some lunch : I was still pondering.

“He said, ‘Send her up some bread and water!’ He did, the brute ; ugh ! Cook said it went agin her stomach as a Christian woman to brile the chops for two sich like !

She kep' this one back for you, miss, —special."

"I could have done with the bread and water, Sarah," I said. But nevertheless I ate the mutton chop which cook had impounded for me from the luncheon of my uncle and Mr. Duchesne; and it did me good.

Lady Crawdour visited me in the afternoon. I was still doubtful, but she did not help to clear away any of my difficulties. She expostulated and remonstrated; she entreated and implored; she scolded,—more mildly than Sir John had done, but sharply enough, still; but she had nothing to suggest, save that I should be a good girl and obey my uncle for my own sake, and Mountiford's sake, and her sake, and all their sakes; and this I would not promise to do.

And she held out no hope that my uncle would be shaken in his resolution by any amount of prayers and supplications from me,

or any one; or by any concession,—save the one.

“And where you are to go, or what is to become of you when you leave this, I’m sure I don’t know,” said Lady Crawdour; “But it’s all your own fault; you are a most foolish, obstinate, and ungrateful girl.” And then she left me to my perplexities again.

Where was I to go, or what was to become of me? Lady Crawdour did not know that, nor did I.

I did not know it when Sarah brought me up a cup of tea at five o’clock; nor when she came again with my dinner at seven; nor when Mountiford knocked at my door at nine, to bid me be of good cheer, and assure me that all would come right. I did not know whither I would turn my footsteps next day at twelve o’clock.

Philip? That is quite out of the question. Mary Thayer? Out of the question too; uncle

would be mad with them. I must not get others into trouble for me.

How few friends I had ! It had never struck me particularly before, I had so many acquaintances. But now, when I came to count up the number of people whom it would be possible for me to apply to when in difficulty, with any hope of help from them, the number was miserably small.

Philip ; Mary Thayer ; Mr. Thayer ; Dr. Jones,—

I could really think of no more for whom I could say I felt anything like true regard, and could expect that they would feel regard for me. And Dr. Jones was as much out of the question as the rest of this little band.

I never thought it would have come to this, nor did Philip ; yet Mr. Stillington must have foreseen it when he said——

What a delightful thing an idea is that, when you are lost in a maze of puzzling

thought, suddenly indicates to you a way through! Such an idea occurred to me just now.

I started up, knit my hands together, and walked up and down the room a couple of times.

Why should I not do that? I had promised. He had foreseen that this would occur, and that was why he had made me promise. And he was a friend. At least, he had said he was, and he looked as if he meant what he had said. I would do it; I would.

I walked up and down for a little while longer. I pushed back my disordered hair from my flushed face, and smoothed my forehead with my hands to help me to think more clearly. I looked round the room, I looked up at the ceiling, and out of the window. I saw clearly to one point, and to that I resolved to go, and leave the rest to chance. I had made up my mind.

Mountiford knocked at my door again. Sir John and Lady Crawdour were in bed now, and so were all the servants; and we might converse a little in safety. So I went out to him on the lobby.

"Why, you look ever so much better! That's well. Never fear but it will all come right. He's been in the deuce's temper all the night; but it can't last, he'll sleep it off; and I'll be at him again in the morning."

"No use, Mountiford; no use. Good-night."

"Oh, but he must, you know. It's all bosh talking about turning you out; he couldn't do that. You'll have hard lines of it with him and the mother for a while; but you must only grin and bear that. I shall have hard lines too, I can tell you."

"I hope not. You stood well by me to-day, Mountiford; you were very good. But when I'm gone you can make it all right with your father again."

“Don’t talk about going,” said my cousin ;
“for that’s bosh.”

“I don’t think so, Mountiford ; it will have
to be. Good-night.”

“Good-night. Yes, you had better go to bed
at once, and have a good sleep ; it will get you
out of the dolefuls. There, good-night. Why,
you’re crying again !”

I was. I knew what Mountiford didn’t,—
that it was good-bye as well as good-night ;
and good-bye, may be, for a very long time.
Mountiford had been, in a great measure, the
cause of my misfortunes ; because, had he acted
as he ought, and refused Miss Duchesne from
the beginning, her father would never have
been pressed upon my acceptance. But his
nature was not a high one, and on the whole I
supposed he had done as well as his nature
would let him ; and when it came to the last, he
had really stood by and supported me. And
he loved me as well, I thought, as he could

love anybody and I liked him,—not, as well as I could like anybody, but very well indeed.

So I cried now, when my cousin kissed me and bade me good-night. I let him kiss me for the same reason that I cried; which was, that I considered I was bidding him a long farewell. When I first came to Crawdour, many years before, a doleful little girl in a black frock, I had offered to kiss my cousin,—then a loutish young man, about eighteen,—as a mark of respect, before I retired to rest,—a compliment which he had not at all appreciated; as he said, while he rubbed the commencement of his red beard against my cheek, that “I smelt of bread and butter,”—a remark which, though possibly literally as well as figuratively correct, as I had just supped of that viand, mortified me sorely, and filled my juvenile breast with indignation. I never offered to kiss him again;

nor would I in after years, when his prejudice had quite evaporated, ever permit such affectionate demonstrations on his part except on the rare occasions of his departure, or arrivals home. Now, rather to his astonishment, I think, I had offered my cheek to his salute.

“There, go to bed,” said Mountiford, “don’t spoil your eyes, Lilla; the whole pack of them aren’t worth that.”

But I did not go to bed,—not just yet, at least.

My cousin went away, and I retired into my room, but not to compose myself for slumber; for I had several things to do before I should be able to think of that. And the first thing I did was to take out my purse and count its contents, and add to it my reserved stock of coin which I kept in my dressing case; the whole making something less than five pounds. And then I collected my few jewels and orna-

ments together, and made them into a little parcel; and took from my wardrobe one change of linen, and the best stuff dress I possessed; and I picked out my stoutest boots and warmest jacket and simplest bonnet and a thick shawl, and laid them all together.

These arrangements being made, and as I considered that my cousin must by this time be in bed and asleep, I put on a pair of soft slippers, and taking my candle in my hand, crept down stairs to the library, where I hunted about until I found a *Bradshaw*.

Having found *Bradshaw*, I turned at once to the one particular page where I knew I should discover what was the first train in the morning on the Longhampton branch line to London; and I ascertained that there was one that left Longhampton as early as half-past six. It stopped also at Crawdour at five minutes to seven; but the station master at Crawdour, and the porter,—who was a brother of Joe

Todd's,—both knew me quite as well as I knew them, and that was well enough for me to recognise them in any part of the world.

Having put back *Bradshaw* in the place where I had found it, I returned to my own room, paying a visit to Sarah on the way.

Sarah was very fast asleep, and it was hard work to wake her ; but I succeeded at last, and without arousing the kitchen-maid who shared her room.

“ Lawk, miss ; is it you ? ” said Sarah, perceiving, after vigorously rubbing her eyes, that it was not a ghost who had thus intruded on her slumbers ; “ you give me such a start, miss ! ”

I wondered whether the spectres who usually visited Sarah, had to shake her by the shoulder so hard as I had been obliged to do, to startle her.

“ Sarah ! Listen to me ! ”

“ Yes, miss.”

"Don't call me until ten o'clock to-morrow ; I am not going down to breakfast."

"Yes, miss."

"Do you understand me, Sarah ? I am not going down to breakfast ; and I don't want to be called before ten."

"Yes, miss. Indeed you wants a sleep, miss; you ought to be in bed now."

"I am going to bed now. Remember, not until ten."

"Yes, miss ; not until ten. An' what'll you have for breakfast, miss ? Cook's got another chop that she's a keeping on purpose."

"Yes ; that,—anything. It does not signify much, Sarah. Cook is very kind ; tell her I said so, Sarah. Good night, Sarah."

And then I kissed the under-housemaid, —an action even more unprecedented than that of my kissing my cousin Mountiford.

"Law, bless you, miss !" said Sarah, embracing me in an overflow of sympathy, "Don't

give way, miss! Not for them old wretches, miss. I wish I had the settling of them,—I do!”

“Goo—good night, Sarah! Mi—mind, not till ten o’clock. Do you remember, Sarah?”

“Yes, miss; ten o’clock. And a long sleep will do you good, miss.”

And then I bade Sarah good night again, and departed; the kitchen-maid having kept up a snoring accompaniment to the whole of this conversation.

I went to bed then without any delay, beyond searching for a small black leather bag which I possessed, and placing it by my thick boots.

CHAPTER VI.

FLIGHT.

BUT though I lay down in bed, I cannot say that I slept much. My brain was too excited either to rest itself, or let my body rest; and I tossed and turned to and fro for a long time. When at last I did sleep, it was but for a short time; then I started up in a wide-awake terror of having overslept myself. I lit my candle, and looked at my watch; it was four o'clock. Longhampton was five miles from Crawdour; it would take me quite an hour and a half to walk there, particularly carrying my black leather bag and shawl; so I rose at once.

I dressed quickly,—putting on the stuff dress, strong boots, warm jacket, and bonnet,—and then packed my bag.

One thing I could not leave behind,—the museum. It took up a good deal of space, two

or three volumes having been added since the Tennyson, besides all the letters. These latter, I thought, I never should be able to cram in, notwithstanding all my efforts ; and in the end, I had to leave out some articles of wearing apparel, to make room for Philip's voluminous manuscript which, after all, had only quite a fictitious value. If I had been wise, I suppose I should have burned the letters, and taken a few more pairs of stockings ; but I was not wise, so I sacrificed my Balbriggan hose to the love-letters.

By this time it was daylight, and nearly five o'clock ; so I extinguished my candle, and taking my bag, shawl, and umbrella with me, descended the stairs again.

I went down to a small sitting-room at the back of the house appropriated to my cousin ; he never went there until nearly twelve o'clock, and it was not entered even by the servants until after breakfast, I knew ; so I

guessed that it would be pretty safe not to be known until after ten o'clock that morning that somebody had opened the shutters there, and not closed them again.

But when I had opened the shutters, before I opened the window, and got out of it, I put into my cousin's tobacco-box,—sure to be the first thing he would touch in the room,—a piece of paper with these words written on it,—


“ Good-bye, Mountry. Don't be anxious about me where I am going: I shall be in safety and well cared for, I am sure ; but it is better for you that you should not know it. I will write to you soon.

“ LILLA.”

Then I unhasped the window, raised the sash, put my bag, shawl, and umbrella on the stone outside, got out, shut the window down again, took up my bag, shawl, and umbrella, and walked away. It was a

lovely bright morning, and the fresh air and brisk exercise soon invigorated me. I got in among the park-trees as soon as I could, lest some one of the servants might have taken it into his or her head to rise half an hour earlier than usual this morning, and looking forth from a window might see me. The Hall stood on high ground, and cook's attic in particular commanded all the open turns of the avenue; cook was my friend, but yet, under present circumstances, I thought it safer to avoid the range of her bedchamber window.

There was a small gate at the bottom of the plantation that opened on to the high road; and for this gate we of the family all had keys, and by it I made my exit from the park. The violets were in blossom again in the plantation, and I stopped for an instant in my hasty walk through it and gathered a few. For the last time! Ah, dear!



I will not say that I did not feel somewhat nervous when I found myself out on the Longhampton high-road, alone, at a quarter-past five in the morning. I had seldom walked on this road by myself before,—never, surely, at this lonely early hour. I will not say that as I walked hastily along I didn't look round fearfully several times. I will not say that my knees didn't knock together when I heard a tramping footstep coming on behind; nor that I didn't drop my black bag, my shawl, and my umbrella and run, when a harsh discordant voice shouted something hideously incomprehensible in my ear.

But I never thought of returning. When I ran, I ran in the direction of Longhampton. And I very soon stopped, for on a repetition of the shout it did not seem so dreadfully unfamiliar. And when I stopped, I found that it was only a boy frightening crows in a field behind the Lodge, who had frightened me too.

And then I went back and picked up my property and proceeded on my way again. And the tramping footstep turned out to belong to a respectable poor woman carrying eggs to market; and as any way the road had no terrors for me comparable with my abhorrence of Mr. Duchesne, nervous though I might be, I walked straight on to Longhampton, and reached the railway-station there at twenty minutes past six.

The station-master looked sharply at me while I asked for my ticket. I did not ask for it quite as I ought to have done. Instead of "One single, second class, Euston Square," I said, "Oh, if you please,—what's the price of a ticket—a second-class ticket?" "And then the station-master said, "Where to?" And then I said, "Oh, to London, if you please?" And then he said, "Return?" Which startled me a little, until it occurred to me that he did not mean to bid me go back

to Crawdour Hall instantly, but to ascertain more definitely the nature of the ticket I required; when I said, "Oh, no; not return. I'm not coming back to-day."

Which was a very bungling way of transacting this little piece of business, and evidently made the station master suspect that I was a young lady not at all accustomed to making journeys by rail, particularly by myself, second class, at half-past six in the morning; which suspicion made him look sharply at me,—and when he looked sharply at me, I think he half recognised me.


But nothing daunted by this, I took my ticket from him, got it notched by the porter, got into the train, and started for London, with my black leather bag, my shawl, and my umbrella.

To one who has never experienced it before, a railway journey alone, second class, is a very strange thing; I had never

experienced it before, and it seemed very strange to me.

It is true. I had travelled a few times from Crawdour to Longhampton, and from Longhampton to Crawdour, by rail, but my cousin Mountiford had always been with me, and we had gone first class, and he had taken care to secure us a carriage to ourselves, and had helped me in and out; and so it had seemed very little different from our usual mode of locomotion, except that the steam-engine drew us much more smoothly, as well as more quickly than an old carriage-horse did, and the public equipage was newer and far more comfortable than Sir John Crawdour's.

Now, however, I had to sit in a wooden box very partially lined with hard, stiff leather. A box full of other people too,—strange people, and people of a kind with whom I was not at all accustomed to close personal contact. And I



had to try and scramble into it by myself as best I could, dragging my few worldly possessions with me; a feat, however, that from want of practice, I accomplished so ill that I stuck fast in the doorway, and might have remained there had not a stout gentleman with a face very like a mangel-wurzel, reached forth his hand and seized my elbow to drag me in, saying at the same time,—

“Mind my toes, young ’ooman, as you come!”

Which admonition, however, was too late; for, scarcely had it been uttered, when I felt my foot come down on some strange and unexpected knobs, which I guessed by the sudden convulsion which seized the body of the mangel-wurzel-faced man, and the exclamation he uttered, as he suddenly let go my elbow, must be his corns!

In tones of the most abject humility I instantly apologised to the mangel-wurzel-faced

man. But, unfortunately, I stood still to do it; and while I was standing still, the train went on suddenly, with a jerk which threw me forward into the arms of another dreadful stranger; while my black bag dropped into the lap of an elderly female, who must have been at least first cousin to our cook, she was so like her; and the point of my umbrella prodded into the chest of the mangel-wurzel-faced man.

“God—bless—my—soul,— young ’ooman! Do you want—to be the death o’ me?” gasped the mangel-wurzel-faced man; whilst cook’s cousin indignantly requested to be informed “where” I was a-goin’ to?

“I beg your pardon, sir; indeed I do. Oh, I hope you are not hurt?” I exclaimed, to the mangel-wurzel-faced man, as I struggled into the vacant seat between him and the Longhampton dentist, as I recognised him to be, upon whom I had fallen.


"Well; not much,—except you've took a'near all the breath out of my body with yer umbrellar, an' scrunched my toe as if it wer' an egg-shell."

"I am very sorry," I said, feeling myself reduced to almost the last stage of misery and degradation. "Indeed, I am very sorry, sir; I didn't intend it at all."

"Well, well," said the mangel-wurzel-faced man, evidently mollified by my humility, "I'm alive an' kicking yet, ye see; so say no more about it. Only be more careful in future; if you had poked out my eye, now, with that umbrellar, you'd have had to marry me, my dear!"

I stared at the mangel-wurzel-faced man, and my cheek flushed with indignation at his outrageous familiarity! But just as I was about to say something that would have shown him at once how grievously he had erred, my attention was called to another quarter.

"Now, miss, axing parding for troubling



ye," said cook's near relative, with the most elaborate but supercilious politeness, "but if ye're *quite* disengaged, I'd be obleeged to ye to tell me what I'm to do with this here bag; for I ain't over strong, and don't feel *quite* ekal to carryin' other people's luggage!"


Meekly I took my bag which I had forgotten. This woman could be no way akin to cook, who was kind and sympathetic; rather, she must be related to Mrs. Lukins.

More acute than the mangel-wurzel-faced man, she evidently saw in me the young lady in untoward circumstances; and true to the instincts of the lower-natured of her sex, buffeted me accordingly. The mangel-wurzel-faced man only perceived in me an awkward, but amiable and good-looking young woman. And he being a man, and I being a woman, my amiability and my good looks atoned for my stupidity; and he forgave me the injuries I had unintentionally inflicted upon his person.

So I reasoned with myself, and my indignation against the mangel-wurzel-faced man evaporated. Besides, though his countenance did resemble that coarse vegetable I have mentioned, he was in no respect so objectionable-looking a person as Mr. Duchesne; and after a year and a half of Mr. Duchesne, I felt that I ought not to be over sensitive in such matters.

So when the mangel-wurzel-faced man offered to relieve me of my bag, I permitted him to do so, and he put it away under the seat, and also put away my umbrella somewhere overhead; and thus unburdened, I felt a little more comfortable and at my ease, particularly as I found that the dentist on my right hand did not seem to have the slightest idea who I was, or to entertain any curiosity about me.

And, besides, if there is one quality which I believe I possess more than any other, it is a



power of adapting myself to circumstances,—any circumstances but Mr. Duchesne; so, though these were quite new and exceptional circumstances, after the embarrassment consequent on my first mistake had subsided, I really adapted myself to them with remarkable ease.

The compartment was quite full. At first, I felt dreadfully squeezed and crowded, but after a time, I managed to fit my shoulders to the shoulders of the mangel-wurzel-faced man and the dentist, and my knees to the knees of the culinary lady opposite, in a position of tolerable comfort. The shoulders were easier to manage than the knees,—my right and left neighbours willingly assisting me in the endeavour, while she opposite to me could not be brought to agree to any arrangement, until she had given vent to several remarks touching the impropriety of “people scroodging other people;” “people thinking every place belonged to themselves;” “people thinking,

when they was a drivin' in public conveyances, that they was in their own carriages;" "people" being "very much mistaken" in so thinking; with sundry other observations of a like character. But so well did I adapt myself, that I soon became perfectly impervious to the sarcasms levelled at me by this lady, and determinedly kept my knees in the position I considered would most conduce to our mutual comfort. In which determination I was upheld by the mangel-wurzel-faced man, who declared in support thereof that "right was right,"—a proposition which nobody, even the culinary lady, attempted to deny.

Furthermore, I actually sustained a conversation at some length, and with considerable satisfaction to both parties, with the mangel-wurzel-faced man. In it he informed me, that having a brother residing in London,—in some region unknown to me, and to him also, but which he supposed to be of high fashion, called

the Borough,—“settled very comfortable in the soap and general chandlery line,” he was going up to pay him a visit and “see the sights.”

Of these “sights” he had a programme already made, which he ticked for me on his fingers. First, of course, came “The Crystal Palace.” Then St. Paul’s, as to which building he was not very certain whether it were a big raree show, a church, or a large general drapery establishment; but it was “somethin’ grand,” and he was determined to see it. The British Museum,—where they kep’ big staties, dug up in Jerusalem,—not much in his line. The National Gallery—pictures—not much in his line neither. The Houses of Parleyment which he was particularly anxious to see, especially the one which contained the wool sack. A theyater and an opery,—he didn’t care which or what, but one of each. And the Monyment. Who or what this was a monument to, he

did not know; may be to Guy Fawkes,—for he had “heard tell” of something about a fire in connection with it. But of all places he was determined to visit the Polytechnic and Madame Tussaud’s. His maiden sister, who lived with him, had been to London last year, and nothing she had witnessed in the great city, had afforded her so much delight as the two last-named exhibitions. Being of “a religious turn,” she had eschewed those wilder dissipations, the opera or play, in which her more lax brother intended to indulge; but the Polytechnic and Madame Tussauds had amply supplied her with those sensations of wonder, curiosity, admiration, horror, disgust, and astonishment, which go to make up an exciting entertainment. And relying on the favourable report of his sister, this gentleman,—whose name I ascertained to be Tomkins,—was resolved to see Madame Tussaud’s and the Polytechnic, or perish in the attempt. The

Zoological Gardens was in his programme too, but from this he did not seem to expect to derive any great amusement or instruction. Indeed, he informed me that he had in his own possession a speckled cow, bred by himself from a celebrated stock, which he was ready to back against any beast, "British or furrin'," residing in the Zoological Gardens. I ventured to suggest the lions and tigers; but he said "Pho! you should see Molly! Overgrown cats and dogs them are,—nuthin' more." And as I did not think it likely I ever should see Molly, I saw no use in continuing the argument.

But I had got pretty well tired of talking to Mr. Tomkins before the train reached Great Grimstead at nine o'clock. I had begun to feel dreadfully hungry, too, having eaten nothing since my dinner yesterday, and not very much then; and rather exhausted, owing to my five mile morning walk. So I was very glad to alight,—the train stopped here ten minutes,

—and seek the refreshment-room, with the prospect of getting something to eat and drink.

This was another entirely new experience,—and I cannot say that it was an altogether agreeable one. Spread on a marble table, in a spacious and lofty apartment surrounded by mirrors, I saw before me a banquet of rare and exquisite delicacies, to the consumption of some of which I resolved instantly to apply myself. But I had never yet attempted to eat, or even seen eggs,—gorgeous eggs, of ruby, emerald, or polished silver—and of these articles I soon perceived that a great part of the entertainment was composed. They were very strange and beautiful to look at, no doubt, but yet I scarcely felt tempted to try one, neither it appeared did any of my fellow-travellers. Besides the gorgeous eggs, there was a great deal of glass in various shapes and forms, and an enormous quantity of paper flowers; but neither of these

materials, I thought, would either suit my digestion or satisfy my hunger and thirst.

I got a cup of tea. Bitter was the cup, but I drained it to the dregs, being thirsty. Something was offered to me that resembled, and which I conceived was, a sponge-cake. I had never yet been reduced to satisfying my hunger on a portion of my own inner flannel garment ; if I had, I should have known what this sponge-cake was like, and should have never been so rash as to attempt to eat it.

Before, however, I had got half through the abortive effort, a bell rang ; and as I saw every one running away suddenly, I ran away too, and took my place in the train again.

I shall not describe the rest of the journey, for it was very wearisome. The dentist lent me a newspaper, which beguiled the way for about half an hour, but the rest of the journey after that was almost unmitigated fatigue and discomfort. I discovered hard protuberances in

the shoulders of the dentist and Mr. Tomkins, the constant friction against which made mine feel quite sore. The woman opposite grew more and more spiteful. She was continually imbibing something out of a black bottle which she carried in a kind of wallet made of straw ; and, fresh after every dose, she renewed the battle of the knees with redoubled vigour, until at last I was obliged to succumb, and cramp mine up as best I could. Mr. Tomkins indeed was very kind ; he wrapped my feet up in his own rug when they got cold, and propped up my back with a pillow which he made out of my shawl, and finally he gave me his own corner seat, and himself did battle with the belligerent female with the wallet, half of whose spitefulness arose, I think, from jealousy of the attention he bestowed upon me, as I perceived that she made various unsuccessful efforts to divert them to herself.

So I was very glad indeed when we got to

London,—never had I felt so tired and so hungry in my life before.

And yet I looked back with no regret to Crawdour, except a stray thought bestowed now and then upon my cousin Mountiford,—and one or two upon the chop which cook had kept for me.

But still I did feel a little terrified when I arrived in London. This Euston Square was so big and confusing and dreadful a place, after the little railway-station at Longhampton, where the station-master had so little to do that he had time to be curious about the travellers.

I had no difficulties about luggage, as most of my fellow-travellers had, for I carried in my hands all that I now could call my own ; but yet I stood still for a while, frightened and bewildered, scarcely able to think where I was going to or what I should do.

Mr. Tomkins' soap and general chandlery

brother from the Borough had come to meet him, and he, prompted by my late companion, asked civilly enough if there was "hanythink as he could do for me;" but I shook my head vaguely in the negative, and then saw them both depart. Then I began to collect my ideas a little. In which I was considerably furthered by a man, a total stranger, of an aspect which I should now denominate the "prowling,"—prowling for anything,—but which, inexperienced as I then was, I was unable to recognise except as something indefinitely objectionable, drawing near me and saying in a low confidential tone,—

"I am afraid your friend is late."

For an instant I looked at him, astonished. Why should he speak to me, a stranger; or did he mistake me for some acquaintance of his own?

"Don't wait for him any longer. I'm going your way, and I'll be most happy to see you there," with an indescribable leer.

Then suddenly I came to my senses. My eyes were opened, and I saw—quite instinctively—what kind of scoundrel this was.

“Go away,” I said, with haughty contempt, but my black bag in the mean time shaking in my hand from the nervous tremor I was in; “go away,—instantly.”

“Oh, now, don’t be cross! I assure you—”

“If you speak to me again,” I said, with the most tremendous firmness, but nearly dropping the bag, “I shall call a policeman to you.”

True born British female as I was, I recognised the policeman as the natural—because law-appointed—protector of our sex in trouble. My idea of London was mostly formed from *Punch* and the *Illustrated News*; from these I conceived that policemen grew spontaneously from the paving-stones, and were always at hand in abundance when wanted.

But though this may have been a somewhat exaggerated notion, true it is that at that very moment I espied a policeman,—I knew him at once from the many portraits of him I had seen. The prowler saw him too, and saw that I saw him! It was enough, he instantly prowled away.

Boldly I went up to the policeman.

“Can you tell me how far off Doughty Street is?”

“Not quite a mile.”

It was highly satisfactory. I need not take a cab and run the chance of being driven to some abode of darkness, where I should be robbed of my precious bag, and perhaps have my throat cut into the bargain.

“I am going to walk there; but, do you see that man?” pointing to the prowler, who was now vanishing in the distance. “He has been speaking to me, and I am afraid he will follow me, but I do not know him at all.”

But the policeman seemed to know him, he smiled a knowing smile.

“Do you know the way?”

“No; I don’t at all.”

“I’ll show it to you. And don’t be afear’d; *he* won’t foller ye.”

Guided by this policeman, in whom I instantly felt ready to place the most implicit confidence, I left the railway-station, and soon found myself in the open street; such a terrific street, after the High Street of Longhampton; and the prowler was there,—I saw him at once, standing by the kerb-stone, waiting for me.

“Don’t be afear’d,” said the policeman, smiling; “*he* won’t foller ye.” And then he directed me how to find Doughty Street; and, as I started, I saw him step up quietly to the prowler, who, after that, did *not* follow me.

But I did not very readily find Doughty

Street. The policeman's directions had consisted entirely of turnings to the right, and turnings to the left ; but after taking a few of these turnings, I felt that I had lost myself. Then I asked another policeman, who directed me again,—in just the same manner,—and then another, who did likewise ; and then I began to think I should never find Doughty Street, when I looked up, and saw it written on a corner house.


No. 130. I soon found that.

“ Does Mr. Stillington live here ? ” Yes, he did. “ Is he at home ? ” “ Oh no ; he wer' never in till gone half-after-six. ” Despair ! It was now just twelve o'clock.

“ Please, might I go in and wait ? ”

The girl who had opened the door looked exceedingly doubtful at this proposition ; but when I had made it a second time, she said would I please stand in the hall while she spoke to Missus.

This I gladly consented to do; and after being for a few moments the auditor of a conference that went on in the front parlour, in the course of which the girl gave a minute description of my personal appearance, and an accurate inventory of my wearing apparel, "Missus" herself appeared. She made a very long speech to me, half of which I could scarcely understand; but she mentioned in it that Mr. Stillington had lodged with her for ten years, and was a gentleman as she had a great respect for, for he had always conducted himself as a gentleman should; but that people had to be careful, particular a woman with a family depending on her, as hadn't always occupied *that* position. But thanked God that she got her bread honest all the same, but wouldn't be the one for to suspect any young lady,—having daughters of her own,—and Johnny, her youngest, was at home, and was a boy as could be trusted; and



it was but threepence in a 'bus to Cheapside. And the purport I gathered from it all was, that she had perfect confidence in Mr. Stillington as she knew him, but had no confidence in me, as she did not know me; but on the whole she considered that neither her silver spoons, nor the fair fame of her establishment would be much endangered if she were to let me come in for half-an-hour, during which time I could send a message to Cheapside to Mr. Stillington by her son Johnny, who could accomplish it in that time, and for the sum of sixpence.

To this plan I willingly consented; and being supplied with writing materials, I sent a note to Mr. Stillington, per Johnny and an omnibus, and sat down to wait in a back parlour, where, unless I could have put a Pembroke table, or six horsehair-covered chairs, or a rickety sofa, into my pocket, there was nothing which I could possibly make myself the unlawful pos-

essor of ; sò I daresay the mistress of 130, Doughty Street, thought there could be no great risk in leaving me alone there, as she did after a time, to my great comfort.

CHAPTER VII.

"A FRIEND INDEED."

I WOKE up with a start. How long I had slept, crouched up in a corner of the rickety sofa I did not know, but it seemed to me that I had only closed my eyes on the Pembroke table and the six horse-hair-covered chairs for one moment, during which I travelled with the speed of lightning back to Crawdour, and was again confronting my uncle and aunt and Mr. Duchesne in the library; when I re-opened them in 130, Doughty Street, and saw Mr. Stillington standing before me.

"My dear," he said, taking my hands, as I started from the rickety sofa; "I am very glad to see you." And then he kissed me as he had done when he bade me good-bye in the plantation at Crawdour.

The strain which my mind had been on

in the conception and execution of this enterprise, and which had supported and kept me up until now the enterprise was completed, suddenly gave way. I covered my face with my hands, and dropping again on the sofa—which nearly broke down under me—began to cry.

Mr. Stillington behaved very sensibly. He did not attempt to stop me, but let me cry quietly for a few moments, only gently patting my arm, and assuring me, in his kindly words, of his aid in my trouble or difficulty, whatever it might be.

“Oh, Mr. Stillington,” I sobbed out in explanation, as soon as I was able. “My uncle has been so cruel! He said if I would not marry Mr. Duchesne, I should go away to-day at twelve o’clock, and never come back! And I did not know what to do; and then I thought of you. You said you would be my friend. And I got up when it was dark, and

walked to Longhampton, and came in the train at half-past six ; and it was so full, and rattled so, and the seat was so hard, and I've walked so much, and I've had nothing to eat, and I'm so tired, that I can't help crying ; but I wouldn't stay, not for all the world. And I'll be a governess, or do needlework, or sell things in a shop ; anything, *anything*, that you advise me, but I'll never go back, —*never*."

"No," said Mr. Stillington ; "you shall not go back. And I'll tell you what I advise you to do ; just take off your bonnet and jacket, and lie down on that sofa and rest yourself, until I bring you something to eat and drink."

This was very good counsel to begin with, and I readily obeyed it. Mr. Stillington's kind words, and the prospect of something to eat too, brought comfort to my soul ; and by the time he returned with some sandwiches and a glass of wine I was cooler again.

He sat and watched me patiently while I partook of these refreshments,—though indeed it was not very long, for I disposed of them with a marvellous rapidity.

“You’ll have some more?” said Mr. Stillington.

“Oh, no, thank you,” I replied. But I said it—unintentionally—so like “Oh, yes, if you please,” that he went away again, and fetched a fresh supply.

“I was so hungry, sir,” I said apologetically. “I had nothing but some tea, and such a horrid cake, since dinner yesterday.”

Mr. Stillington only smiled a little; while I ate up the rest of the sandwiches, but not so quickly as I had done the first; and when they were finished, and the second glass of sherry too, I pronounced with the most perfect sincerity that I had eaten and drank quite enough.

“Very well,” said Mr. Stillington. “And

now, if you feel tolerably yourself, and equal to it, we'll talk of this little business of yours again. But if you are afraid that it will upset you,—if you feel at all weak or nervous, we'll defer it until to-morrow."

But I was not weak or nervous now. The sherry and sandwiches had fortified me so, that I was able to give Mr. Stillington a detailed and perfectly coherent account of the event which had led to my leaving my uncle's house ; and also able to lay before him, as clearly as might be, the few vague ideas I had formed as to some mode of earning my own subsistence ; to ask his aid and advice in carrying out which was the object that had brought me to London.

"Does Philip know anything of this ?" said Mr. Stillington, when I had concluded.

"Oh, no. He knew that my uncle and Lady Crawdour wanted me to marry Mr. Duchesne, but I never told him how very hard

they were, and how much I was teased and vexed. If I had told him how unhappy my life there was made, it would have looked as if,—as if—”

“Yes,” said Mr. Stillington; “I see; exactly,—you were quite right.”

“And now, if I were to go to him, and tell him that I have been turned out, and have no home, and not five pounds in the world, what could he do?”

“Only one thing, under the circumstances.”

“And I don’t want him to do that until it suits himself.”

“Perhaps it would suit him now?”

“Oh, no, it wouldn’t;” shaking my head determinately.

“Are you quite sure?”

“Quite, sir.”

“Well; I dare say you know his ideas on this subject a great deal better than I do?”

“Oh, yes.”

Of course I did. Was not my black bag more than half full of his ideas on this subject? But I did not think it necessary to mention this to Mr. Stillington; I preferred that he should think my bag was full of stockings and pocket-handkerchiefs.

"It was apprehending some such circumstances as these arising that made me beg you to look to me as a friend," said Mr. Stillington; "and I am very glad that you have had sufficient confidence in me to do so."

"I thought you would not have said it, sir, if you did not mean it."

"And you were quite right; I never do promise anything that I don't intend to perform. Now I will tell you what I intend to do for you, and you will tell me if it suits you. If it does not,—why, I must think of something else."

"Oh, it will be sure to suit me."

"It may; particularly as it is only helping

you to carry out your own views. My idea is, to find you at once a respectable place to live in, until I can get you a situation in which you can maintain yourself. Will that do?"

"Oh, yes," I said; "any respectable place where I can stay until I get some work."

"And what kind of situation would you like best?"

"There is not much choice, I suppose," I said. "Governess or companion; but I think I would like to be a governess best."

"Why, now?"

"Oh, well, I think it would be nicer to be with children than cross old women."

"Children are often very tiresome; and teaching is hard work."

"Yes. But governesses are not quite so much snubbed, I think."

"Don't you? It always seemed to me they got their full share."

"Oh, I dare say they get plenty of it, too; but I'll get used to it."

"You evidently don't look forward to your new career as a very delightful one."

"No; but I don't suppose it is so bad, either. And, at any rate, it will be a thousand times better than the one I have left behind."

"Mr. Duchesne?"

"Yes. I had no choice but that, you see, Mr. Stillington."

"I see. But, on the whole, I think you are wrong about the companionship business. I think it would suit you better than being a governess; and they are not all old women who require companions. You might find some nice young person about your own age who would be glad to have you, and with whom you might get on very well."

I thought within myself that I could much better put up with snubbing from an old woman than from a young one. Though, to say truth, I had had very little practice in bearing it from either, and honestly did not think it was the profession I was best suited for.

But I would not oppose Mr. Stillington, who was so kind to me; and, after all, a little unpleasantness more or less would not signify much. So I said,—

“I think the best would be not to mind about choice at all, but to take the first that came in the way.”

“A very good and common sense view,” said Mr. Stillington; “I heartily approve of it. So now that is settled, the next thing is to see about a place for you to stay.”

“A place where they won’t charge me too much.”

“Of course, a place where you won’t be charged too much.” Then Mr. Stillington rang the bell.

When the servant appeared,—

“Tell Mrs. Brown I would like to speak to her for a moment, if she pleases?”

When the servant had disappeared,—

“Mrs. Brown is the name of my landlady,”

he said. "You may remember that on the one occasion when I had the pleasure of meeting you before, I alluded to the remarkable resemblance to the female hippopotamus; did you perceive it?"

"I never saw a hippopotamus," I said.

"Ah, true; you have not been in London before."

"But I have seen a picture of a hippopotamus—and Mrs. Brown is very like it."

"You shall see the animal itself, some day, and then you will recognise the likeness unmistakably. And yet Mrs. Brown is a most worthy woman; I have a great respect for her."

"She is very fat," I said.

"She is, unfortunately, corpulent. Much as I respect her, I should not care to have her sixth on my side in an omnibus in hot weather,—no more than I should the hippopotamus. But here she comes." And Mrs. Brown entered.

"Mrs. Brown," said Mr. Stillington, "this is a young lady who is under my guardianship."

Mr. Stillington seemed to have a peculiar fancy for electing himself guardian to forlorn young people.

"Oh, indeed!" said Mrs. Brown, with a wonderful smile. "Oh, if I had only knowed—"

"Exactly," said Mr. Stillington. "She is going to stay here for a few hours, Mrs. Brown, and I have to go out and leave her; but I would be very much obliged if you would see and make her comfortable in my absence—"

"Oh, I'm sure, sir,—"

"Have a fire lit in my sitting-room as soon as possible; and get her tea, or anything else she requires."

"She's come off a journey, sir."

"Thank you, Mrs. Brown. The fire as soon as you can, please."

"Oh, immediate, sir. I'm sure, if I had only knowed the young lady's name,—"

"Exactly so," said Mr. Stillington. "And if you have a footstool which you can spare, and would kindly put a pillow in that arm-chair, I think she would be more comfortable."

"Oh, of course, Mr. Stillington! Anything as the house contains. And if you had only told me last night, sir, as she was expected—"

"Just so, Mrs. Brown. The fire, please, at once."

And then, Mrs. Brown, finding the attempt to elicit anything more from her impenetrable lodger than he chose to tell, quite fruitless, withdrew to see about the arrangement of the sitting-room for my reception.

"I don't know," said Mr. Stillington, "whether inquisitiveness be a peculiar trait of the hippopotamus, but I may as well warn you that it is the chief mental characteristic of Mrs. Brown."

"So I perceive."

"I thought you would; but in case you

might not, I thought it as well to warn you. Now, I need hardly say that the less you satisfy her inquisitiveness, the better."

"I'll not satisfy it at all."


"That is the best. Now, about clothes; did you bring any with you?"

I pointed to my bag, leaving it to himself to guess how much of wearing apparel it might contain.

"That wouldn't hold very much. But can you do with what you have brought until to-morrow?"

"Oh, for longer than that!"

"Very well; now, I will leave you. I dare say the room will soon be ready; make yourself as comfortable there as you can. Ask Mrs. Brown for everything you want, and let her know as much about you as you would wish to have published in *The Times* to-morrow,—no more than that. Good-bye, my dear, for a while."



Very shortly after Mr. Stillington's departure, Mrs. Brown came and conducted me in person to his sitting-room, where a cheerful fire was burning.

"But I'm sure if he'd told me as you was a comin' I'd 'ave 'ad it lit long ago, Miss—a—a."

"Oh, thank you," I said, "it will do very well now;" and I gladly began to warm my feet and hands which seemed to have got into a chronic state of cold.

"And I'm sure I must have seemed horrid suspicious; but there *is* so many goin' about, callin' theirselves City Missions, or 'lustrated Bibles, or shawls as their brothers brought from Ingy, an' they'll sell cheap, through need; just seein' what there is as they can lay their hands upon. There was my own umbrellar, an' little Johnny's great coat as was took from the pegs, while the girl went upstairs, sayin' as he was come to toon the pianar, which we hadn't no pianar at all; an' 'Mariar,' I says,

‘you stoopid thing, never let nobody come in as doesn’t give a reg’lar account of theirselves,’ an’ as you named no name, an’ not knowing as Mr. Staunton,—dear young man,—’*ad* a sister—”

She paused. I made no reply.

“Not as there is no resemblance between you at all,—he bein’ so fair, an’ your ’air all as one as my Julia Anne’s, that took after her papa completely, that was a dark man. But Mr. Stillington saying as he was guardian—”

I was still silent ; it was the safest plan.

“Or, may be, a cousin—”

I poked the fire most assiduously.

Mrs. Brown went on another theme.

“But I’m sure a blessin’ it is to have such a guardian ! ‘Make it good, Mrs. Brown, he says, ‘an’ large, for he ’ave a fine appetite,’ meanin’ Mr. Staunton, when he come to dine with him once and again on a Sunday ; though

for hisself he have nuthin' more never than a briled chop or a steak an' a peteytie. 'An' a good piece of the sirloin,' he says, 'an' a nice bit o' vegetable; an' don't forget the 'orse radish, Mrs. Brown, nor yet the mustard,' which indeed he is so easy about the cruet for hisself, that I many times do. 'I'm not for no pamperin',' he says, 'but the boy is big, an' works 'ard, an' he must be well fed.' An' true it is that Sunday was a week, Johnny he cried with disappointment when the dish came down, though I calkelated the puddin' wide for three; for Mr. Stillington, he always says, when orderin', 'an' give what's left to Johnny, Mrs. Brown;' an' he never touches it hisself. But Johnny he cried, a' waitin' as he was at the bottom of the stairs with his plate an' his spoon, for a morsel there wasn't hardly. 'An' you'll 'ave to make it larger next time Mrs. Brown," he says, a lookin' knowin' at me, but not sayin' nuthin' about Johnny, by

reason of Mr. Staunton's feelin's, which he didn't know nuthin' about the child; 'for you see I didn't want none to go to waste, Mrs. Brown,' *he* says, a-laughin', an' pointin' to the dish, which there was no pacifyin' Johnny with oranges an' a cocoa nut, after bought special a purpose with sixpence, as Mr. Stillington he slipped on the empty dish."

"He is very kind, indeed," I ventured to say. But "I think I should like a cup of tea, Mrs. Brown, if it is not too much trouble," I added; for though I was exceedingly gratified at receiving such a proof of the excellent condition of my lover's health as his demolition of the pudding afforded, I was anxious to get rid of Mrs. Brown.

And as I think she saw that it was nearly as useless trying to get anything out of me as out of my newly-appointed guardian, she then left me to prepare the tea. I politely declined her friendly offer, too, of opening my bag for me

to get out my slippers. Nor did I satisfy her kind inquiries as to where the rest of my luggage was, which she made before leaving the room, in a last desperate effort to find out who I was or where I came from.

Mr. Stillington's sitting-room was a neatly, ut by no means luxuriously, furnished apartment. However, the comfort of its one arm-chair was very much improved by the pillow and footstool which he had considerably ordered for me; and in it I was able to rest my weary limbs for the hour or more that elapsed before he returned.

He had found a temporary home for me. Mr. Gorman, a lawyer, with whom he was acquainted, and his wife, would receive me in their house for as long as it was convenient for me to stay.

"Mr. Gorman knows your friend, Mr. Bright, of Longhampton," he said, "and I have given him your real name too; but still you may rest

assured that no communication whatsoever will be made through him to your family, nor will you be in any way interrogated as to your affairs. I have settled all that. Mrs. Gorman is very delicate, and stays mostly in her own room ; you will see very little of her, neither by her will your movements be in any way pried into, or interfered with."

This was very comfortable. But though I never doubted that I should find everything as Mr. Stillington said, I could not understand how he was able to insure this obedience and co-operation from other people.

But though I could not comprehend it, such was really the case. Mr. Stillington had brought a cab with him, in which we started at once for my new abode, which lay a little way out of London,—at least out of the crowded streets, at a place called Holloway. I was received by Mr. and Mrs. Gorman with considerable cordiality, just as if they knew all

about me, though they did not allude in the slightest degree to my private affairs.

"About the situation for you," said Mr. Stillington, before he took his leave. "I think you had better leave all that to me."

"Thank you," I said; "since you are kind enough to take the trouble, I will. In fact, I know of no way that I could do it myself, except by putting an advertisement in *The Times*."

Like all country people, I had an unbounded faith in advertisements in *The Times*.

"A very bad plan," said Mr. Stillington, who evidently had no faith in them; "a great deal more is to be done by private inquiries among friends."

"But I have no friends here but yourself."

"And I may be able to manage it for you. If not, then you can try advertising. Good-bye, my dear, take care of yourself, and keep your mind at rest."

CHAPTER VIII.

WAITING FOR A SITUATION.

HOWEVER, it was much easier for Mr. Stillington to tell me to keep my mind at rest than for me to do it. Though the assistance and protection which he instantly afforded me had turned this extraordinary enterprise of mine into a very different affair to what it would otherwise have been, yet still my position was one of such doubt and uncertainty that I could not but feel a little anxious. I had plenty of time, too, to think about my perplexing affairs, for of course I had nothing to do here in London. My host and hostess I never saw until dinner-time. My breakfast was sent up to me in my own room, and the rest of the day I spent in a parlour by myself; Mrs. Gorman never appearing until the return of her husband from his business in the even-

ing. She had a sitting-room of her own in which she spent the afternoon, generally receiving visitors; but it seemed to be tacitly understood that I did not want to see strangers, and would prefer to be by myself; so I was never asked to appear there. But, in the evening, when we all met, nothing could be more kind and civil than they both were,

Mr. Stillington came to see me every day, at some time or another; he always told me not to worry myself, but to keep my mind at rest; but in answer to my question about the situation, he only replied that he was "making inquiries," and "seeing what could be done."

I had written to my cousin Mountiford and Mrs. Thayer, bidding them to be in no trouble about me; but I had not written to Philip. And now I began to be anxious lest news of my disappearance should have reached him.

"He has heard nothing yet, I assure you,"

said Mr. Stillington. "I saw him to-day at the office, and he looked quite happy and well, as he could not do if he were in any anxiety about you."

"But I almost always wrote to him twice a week; and now it will be a week to-morrow since I left Crawdour, and I have not written to him since the day before."

"He'll only think you've a cold in your head."

This did not satisfy me. I knew how distressed Philip would be even to think that I had a cold in my head.

"I *know* he'll be very anxious, poor fellow!"

Perhaps Mr. Stillington thought that I would rather think Philip would be anxious than not, for then he said,—

"Well, he did look rather disappointed when he found there was nothing for him among the letters to-day. I was in the office when the morning post came, and I noticed it."

Tears rose to my eyes.

"But I'm sure he thought it was only a cold," said Mr. Stillington, hastening to comfort me. "And besides, you know a little anxiety and disappointment doesn't do a young fellow any harm ; it is not well that everything should run too straight and smooth."

This I thought cruel.

"Philip has had anxiety and disappointment enough already," I said.

"H—um," said Mr. Stillington, in a not-agreeing-with-me manner.

"Indeed he has, that you do not know of."

"I wonder what it was?" said Mr. Stillington. "You talked to somebody else before his eyes for five minutes, I suppose ; or said 'No' some time when you meant 'Yes ;' or some other dreadful severity as hard to bear?"

This was wrong, I knew. But, really, when I came to think of it, I could not remember any more acute sufferings that my lover had undergone on my account.

"On the whole," said Mr. Stillington, "I really do not think you need distress yourself at all about this young man for the present. If he is made a little anxious, it will only be for a very short time. We shall be able to relieve it, I have no doubt, in a day or two."

But it made me rather miserable to think that Philip should be anxious about me, even for a day or two. I began to wish very much that I had the situation, that I might be able to see him again, and set his mind at rest.

CHAPTER IX.

A SUITABLE COMPANION.

I HAD not very long to wish. I had been little more than a week in London, and Philip could not have been more than three or four days wondering why I didn't write, when Mr. Stillington came one morning to announce that he had obtained for me what I wanted.


"And I think you are likely to be as comfortable there as anywhere you could go," he said.

"Is it—is it—a governess?" I inquired, in some little trepidation.

"No," said Mr. Stillington. "A companion."

I think my countenance fell a little.

"But indeed you need not be alarmed. I am sure you will do very well, and be tolerably



happy ; one cannot expect to be *very* happy in this life, you know."

"But I did expect to be very happy in this life,—only not as a companion however," I replied.

"Oh, I suppose not."

"And indeed I'll do everything I can, and then perhaps she'll be kind to me, and I shall get on very well."

"Yes," said Mr. Stillington ; "I'm sure you will."

"Is it with a young or old person ?" I inquired ; for this was a point I was anxious about.

"Rather young ; but that I think you will find more agreeable."

I did not feel so sure about this, but I did not say so.

"What shall I have to do ?"

Mr. Stillington did not seem inclined to volunteer much information on the subject ;

so I had to elicit what I wanted to know by asking questions.

“Oh, not very much. To make yourself generally agreeable will be the principal thing. Go out for a walk when you are asked ; play and sing when you are asked—”

“I don’t play well ; and I can hardly sing at all.”

“Ah, then, I daresay you won’t be called upon to do much in that line. Indeed, I was not asked about your capacities in that respect ; but I mentioned it to you as one of the things sometimes required of companions. You may be called upon to read aloud sometimes.”

“Oh, that I can do very well,—and I like it.”

“You will have to superintend the domestic affairs, and possibly to do some needlework.”

“Oh, I don’t mind that at all. What else ?”

“Well ;” said Mr. Stillington, rubbing his forehead, “I cannot think of anything else just at present. However, there may be other

duties, which no doubt the—the *party* will explain to yourself.”

“What is the name?”

“Well, upon my word!” said Mr. Stillington; “that I never thought of inquiring!”

“How strange!”

“Was it not most amazing now that I should have overlooked such an important point!”

I thought so, too.

“However, you will soon know; for your would-be employer is to call this morning to see you; when if you mutually like each other,—that is a very important point in a situation of this kind,—and think you will suit, you can make more definite arrangements than I thought I should be justified in entering into on your account.”

“Oh,” I said, “if she likes me, that will be all right. Whether I like her or not, I will accept the situation, and make the best of it.

I cannot go on as I am,—I have no money at all. You are very very kind, but I have no right to throw myself upon you to support me; and that you are doing now.”

“Don’t think of that at all,” said Mr. Stillington. “I have a great deal more money than I want to spend on myself; and I am very happy to spend some of it so well as in helping a young girl placed in so cruel a position as you were.”

“I don’t know what I should have done, but for you,” I said. “I had no friend,—none, at least, that could have helped me,—but you.”

“I hope you will soon have as good, or a better one,” said Mr. Stillington. “Indeed, that is all I fear,—that this new friend will be so nice and agreeable, that you will forget me altogether.”

“That is not at all probable,” I replied.

“I don’t know,” said Mr. Stillington, meditatively. “I am but a stupid, sad old fellow.”

I took his hand in mine.

"You have been kinder to me than any one else in the world has been—but one," I said, in a burst of gratitude. But in justice I ought not to have made even the single reservation I did.

"I can assure you that anything I have done, was quite a pleasure to me," said Mr. Stillington. "Still, I can quite understand that you would feel happier if you were independent of me; and it was for this reason that I made no delay in arranging this matter we have been speaking about for you. But, remember, you are not to enter into it unless you feel that you can do so with thorough willingness and pleasure."

"Oh, but I am sure I can," I said; "and you are very very kind, Mr. Stillington, and I thank you very much. I am sure I never did anything to deserve that you should be so good to me."

"Do you forget Philip?" said Mr. Stillington.

No ; I did not forget Philip at all. But few guardians would have thought that, under such circumstances as his and mine, they had any particular subject for gratitude towards me. But this mention of Philip suggested another idea to my mind.

“Will this person I am going to be companion to live in London ?” I inquired.

“Oh, certainly. What part I do not know, but in London, certainly.”

“I wonder whether she would mind—.” I paused and hesitated.

“Whether she would mind what ?” said Mr. Stillington.

“Would she mind—Philip—coming to see me—sometimes ?”

“H—um,” said Mr. Stillington, looking at the carpet, and rubbing his chin in a very doubtful manner ; “really, I should hardly like to answer about that.”

I felt very doleful.

“ Perhaps, if I said—if I said, that I knew a young man—who was very good and steady—who would like to come sometimes,—not often you know, but just once in a way,—perhaps she might not object ?”

“ H—um,” said Mr. Stillington, “ very doubtful.”

What a cruel wretch she must be !

“ Well, it can’t be helped,” I said, with a sigh ; “ I suppose I shall see him once before I go there, and we may meet sometimes, accidentally—”

“ H—um,” said Mr. Stillington again ; “ I should not think that likely to happen often.”

“ Well, perhaps she’ll give me a holiday sometimes,” I said, determined to put the best face upon it.

“ Oh, certainly, you’ll have a holiday sometimes.”

“ And, of course, if I had continued to live at Crawdour, I could never have seen him ; and

even once in six months would be better than nothing."

"Certainly," said Mr. Stillington, "much better than nothing. I am glad to see that you intend to take it philosophically."

Perhaps I should not have taken it so philosophically, if I had seen any other way of taking it. But I had not much time to reflect on this point, for just then there came a loud double knock at the hall door.

I started. It was long before the hour that Mrs. Gorman saw her friends.

"Oh, Mr. Stillington," I exclaimed, "it is she!"

"Now don't be alarmed, my dear," he said, rising and taking my hand between both of his; "I am sure you will find it all right, and both like each other, and understand each other in a very short time."

Then I thought of asking the question, which any business-like young woman would have asked long before.

"What—what—will she pay me?"

"That, too, I have left for you to settle between yourselves; and I have no doubt you will agree on satisfactory terms."

I heard the hall door opened and closed quickly again.

"Oh, it is she," I said; "she is coming in!"

"Yes, I dare say," said Mr. Stillington, moving towards the door.

"Oh, don't go away; pray don't go away!"

"You can speak more freely, perhaps, by yourselves."

"Oh, no, no; please stay." I felt a sort of nervous horror of my first encounter with this person to whom I was to be a companion.

Mr. Stillington smiled. "Indeed I think you'll prefer to be alone."

"Oh, no, no! But dear me, how fast she's running up? And what a heavy step she has! Why—"

Mr. Stillington was smiling now more than I

had thought it possible for him to do, as he went forward and opened the door. My heart beat fast. It did not beat at all less fast when the conviction flashed into my mind, like a ray of light into the darkness, that that footstep—now so near—was a familiar one, though I had not heard it now for more than a year! But it—my heart—took a great jump, and then suddenly stopped beating altogether, when I heard a voice that certainly belonged to no female, old or young, wanting a companion, cry, “How are you, sir? Where is she?” Then, in an instant, I had run across the room with outstretched hands, which, however, Philip, rushing in, did not take, but clasped me in his arms!

“This is the most suitable situation I could find you,” said Mr. Stillington; “I hope it will answer.” And then he left the room, shutting the door behind him.

The reader must follow him for five minutes.

CHAPTER X.

EXPLANATIONS.

WHEN we had somewhat recovered equanimity, Philip explained everything to me.

How about four days before, just as he was beginning to feel anxious at not receiving his usual bi-weekly despatch from me, he got a letter from my uncle, couched in the most insolent terms, announcing my "unauthorized" departure from home; and the conviction of my family that I had taken refuge with him; which if I had done, "I had cut myself off for ever from their care and protection, and branded myself with indelible disgrace." And another somewhat more civil epistle from Mountiford, inclosing one to me, which he requested Philip would give. Distracted with grief and anger, he instantly replied to both, in their own tone; and then he hastened to

Mr. Stillington to acquaint him with the matter and ask for instant leave of absence, that he might go and search for me in all the corners of the earth ; when, to his surprise, his guardian informed him that I was in London under his care, and had been since a few hours after I left my uncle's house ; but that he had not informed him of the fact, to enable him to answer with truth that he knew nothing of my whereabouts, to the inquiries which he, Mr. Stillington, felt sure would be made of him, Philip, by my relations concerning me. Philip, of course, was quite reassured at this news, and begged to be informed of my exact whereabouts, so that he might see me at once ; which information, however, Mr. Stillington would not supply him with until he had promised to abstain from any communication, personal or otherwise, with me for a few days, pending some arrangements which he was making.

“ Oh, that was about the situation he has

got for me. But, to be sure now, I suppose he has not got the situation for me at all! He was only pretending!"

"Why," said Philip, laughing, "I am the situation."

"You! Nonsense. Didn't he tell you that I am going to be a governess or companion?"

"Oh, yes, he told me," said Philip, laughing still more. "But I want a companion. Don't you see?"

I confess I did not at first. But after thinking an instant or two, looking at Philip's smiling joyous face, I began to perceive. But when I did, I did not smile or look joyous as he did. I shook my head.

"Oh no, that cannot be," I said.

"Why not?"

"O Philip, you remember what we said about it long ago?"

"Yes; but that is all changed now. Mr. Stillington has pensioned off Thomson, the

head confidential man, who did all the important correspondence. He was getting very old, and wishing to retire. I always knew I should get the place whenever he did, but I did not think it would be so soon; but Mr. Stillington settled it with Thomson yesterday, and has given me the post."

This did alter the aspect of affairs, certainly. I began to smile too.

"O Philip, how kind he is."

"Oh yes, very," said Philip. But he seemed to take this kindness of Mr. Stillington almost as a matter of course, and not to have at all as high a sense of it as I had.

"When he told me that you were in London, he asked me what I was going to do; and I said, of course, that I intended to ask you to marry me immediately."

"You didn't?"

"Oh, yes,—I did. And then he said, But was I sure that you would have me?"

"A very sensible observation," I remarked. Philip was startled; but when he saw that I was smiling still, he went on.

"And I said that I was."

"In—deed!"

"Yes, I did. Perhaps I was wrong, but I said it, all the same. And then he asked how I intended that we should live."

"Another sensible observation," I said; "for you, Philip, seem to have lost all your old prudence."

"I have not," he replied. "I have no less prudence now than I had twelve months ago; but circumstances have changed. I did not love you less then than I do now,—that circumstance has not changed, but others have. You had your uncle's home and protection then."

"Nice protection—"

"No; but such as it was you had it, and you were out of the reach of all want. I could not have kept you from want then,

and there could have been no excuse for me if I had induced you to leave your home until I was able to do that, at least. But now it is quite different, it would be impossible for you to stay there any longer ; and though what I had when Mr. Stillington asked me how I intended to support you, was not at all enough to support you as I would wish, still it was nearly double what I had last year, and we might have managed on it ; at any rate, I thought it would be better, and I felt sure you would think it better than being a governess or companion."

I fancied I should. I had not been brought up to think it a fine thing for a woman to work for herself and be independent. If I had been a genius, and so might have become an authoress, or an artist, or something of that kind, I have no doubt I should have thought of it without any bringing up. But I was not a genius, so nothing was left to me but to

become a governess or companion; and only dire necessity suggested to my mind the adoption of one or other of those agreeable professions. But when I had to choose between Mr. Duchesne and being a governess or companion, I chose one of the latter, as being by many degrees the less disagreeable.

But when, besides my want of independence, Philip was thrown into the scale, there was no doubt but I should think it better. He may have grown a little less prudent in twelve months, but I certainly had not grown at all more so.

“And that was what I said to Mr. Stillington,” Philip continued. “He did not seem to see it quite in the same light: it rather vexed me; for he said, ‘Of course, of course,’ when I said I could not bear that you should have to take a situation. But when I said that we would be married, he asked, Did I think we could live on the air? and said I seemed to

forget how you had been brought up, and what you had been accustomed to; which I am sure I didn't. And I thought it very hard that he wouldn't tell me where you were until I had promised not to go to see you, or write to you, or even send you a message, for four days. I didn't know what he was at, so I wouldn't promise at first; but then, when he said that 'the delay would in no way interfere with my plans, but rather facilitate them;' and as I knew that though he likes a little reserve and mystery sometimes,—does not like to say a word about a thing until it is settled to the last particular,—you may trust your life to his word,—I did promise, and then he told me where you were. But he might just as well have let me come to see you, for I'm sure I have not done a bit of neat work since; but he was determined to keep me to my word. And there was no getting a syllable out of him on the subject until yesterday evening,

when he called me into his room, after old Thomson who had been closeted with him for half an hour or more, went out. And then he told me that Thomson was to be pensioned off, and I was to have his place ; and might come to-day and tell you, and then we might settle our affairs ourselves in whatever way we liked best ; he wouldn't interfere."

"He is very kind," I said. "O Philip, so different from Uncle John."

And then I told him the story of my woes, more comprehensively than I had done before ; and all my sufferings, even to the kicks which the fat woman had inflicted on my shins and ankles in the railway carriage coming up ; and received such condolence and sympathy that it would have been almost worth while to have gone through it all over again.

But while I was being sympathised with, Mr. Stillington came back, which put a stop to it.

I made great demonstrations of gratitude to him; then kissing his hands, and even weeping again. And he embraced me, and kissed me, and called me his "darling," and his "dear child;" much to the astonishment of Philip, who evidently was not accustomed to such affectionate displays on the part of his guardian. And then he spoke to Philip of our future life; more as if he were my guardian,—or even father,—than Philip's. And all the affectionate demonstrations were between him and me. Philip and he shook hands, certainly, and with an appearance of perfect mutual respect and confidence, but still in a very calm and matter of fact manner.

"Now," said Mr. Stillington, when he and I had subsided again, "it is time for me to go back to the office. I am not very fond of giving holidays, Philip, as you know, but you can have one for the rest of to-day, if you like to take it."

Of course Philip liked to take it; and he thanked Mr. Stillington again, very becomingly, but very *quietly*.

"And you can have a week before you enter on your new duties; but you had better arrange to take it as soon as you can, for Thomson is anxious to get away."

Philip thanked him again. "I will take it as soon as possible, sir," he said, with a great increase of fervour.

"I have no doubt you will," Mr. Stillington replied, smiling. "Very obliging of him to Thomson; isn't it, Miss Crawdour?"

I did not reply. But Philip laughed, and blushed somewhat too, as was his wont. I blushed a little also, although I didn't speak.

"Very well," said Mr. Stillington; "that is settled. Now, Philip, I would like to have a word or two for the last time in private with this young lady, if neither she nor you object."

Neither of us did object. So Philip,—

evidently having the highest confidence in his late guardian, in this as in every other respect, —went away, and left us together.

“The capacities of that black bag you brought with you must have been exceedingly limited,” said Mr. Stillington. “I am ashamed to say that I was so stupid as to forget, until last night, that you had left all your wardrobe behind you when you came away.”

“But I have been able to manage very well, thank you,” I said. “Mr. Gorman sent a servant with me to a shop, and I bought a few things I wanted, until I should be settled and could send for my clothes. Lady Crawdour will give them to me, I am sure; they are no use to her.”

“Don’t mind them,” said Mr. Stillington; “don’t trouble Lady Crawdour about them. You are going to be married now, and young ladies always have new clothes when they are married. Get new ones.” And he put a little

piece of folded paper into my hand, just as he had done the locket twelve months ago.

Of course I opened it at once to see what it was. It was a hundred pound note.

"Oh, I couldn't take this," Mr. Stillington, I exclaimed, offering it back as I had done the locket; "it is a great deal too much. And, besides, I shall be just as happy married with my old clothes as with new."

"I am sure of that, but you must have it all the same. I should not be so happy if you didn't; and would you not like to oblige me?"

"I would, of all things; but taking all this money is not obliging you."

"It is obliging me very much. And, besides, it is no great sum after all; most young ladies would not think it half enough."

"It is more than twice too much."

"Not at all," said Mr. Stillington. "I grant that I think it enough; if I had not, I would have given you more. But I think it enough

for the position you have chosen, it all depends upon that, you know ; come, put it up."

And then I did put it up, thanking Mr. Stillington very heartily.

"But I am sure I shall never spend all this," I said.

"Then put by the rest. Money always comes of use."

"I'll give it to Philip."

"Don't. Mr. Philip has plenty of money for himself; quite as much as is good for him. And you mustn't spoil Philip by doing too much for him,—I never did. Young men are very easily spoiled."

"Are not young women, too?" I said, laughing. "And yet, Mr. Stillington, I think you are trying to spoil me."

"No ; young women are quite different. But yet I don't intend to spoil you, either."

And then Mr. Stillington bade me good-bye, and went away. And, when he was gone,

Philip came back. Then we went out and enjoyed the holiday. Philip did not have many holidays ; so, under any circumstances, one was welcome. Under present circumstances it was especially welcome, and very agreeable.

I confess I had not received a favourable impression of London in my only previous peregrination there: that on my first arrival from the railway terminus to Doughty Street. I had gone along the Euston Road first, and then through some streets and squares ; the impressions I received then were entirely of dirty vulgarity or dull gentility. That they were correct, every one who traverses these regions will, I think, agree with me.

But now it was quite different. We walked through Regent Street, and along Piccadilly, and down St. James's Street, and Pall Mall, and across a bit of St. James's Park, and went through Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. And we lunched at a

restaurant down there, where there was the politest waiter in the world, who seemed never to have met before a human being in whose welfare he took so deep an interest as he did in mine. So kindly did he serve me with lamb, and cordially offered me mint sauce, and affectionately recommend the peas and new potatoes, and so grieved to the soul was he when I would drink beer as Philip did, instead of any of the old and choice vintages whose excellent qualities he was so thoroughly acquainted with. No doubt he saw in me a tendency to biliary disorder, and dreaded the ill effects on my system of a beverage that could only be charged twopence the half-pint for.

The shops were beautiful, and I began to feel very anxious to spend some of the hundred pounds ; only that it seemed wicked to break in upon a sum that, to a poor young couple such as we were, even with Thomson's

post and its emolument of three hundred and fifty pounds per annum, ought to be quite a little fortune of ready cash. But when I communicated some of these ideas to Philip, he said it was quite nonsense for me to have any hesitation about spending it ; it was given to me to spend upon myself, and upon myself it should be spent, and in no other way, with his consent. Thus encouraged, I did spend some of the hundred pounds, buying a pretty silk dress and most becoming bonnet. Only that Philip,—who had luckily received his month's salary that day, and had it in his pocket,—had to pay for the things ; the shop people absolutely refusing to have anything to do with the hundred pound note ; and indeed their behaviour to us when I produced it was so odd that I was very glad when we got out of the shop.

“ I think they thought we were swindlers,” said Philip ; and though I had never seen swindlers, I really believed they did.

Then we drove back to Holloway as we had come from it to Regent Street, in a very clean hansom cab, with a very nice lively horse. I found it a very pleasant mode of conveyance. I had wanted to go in an omnibus, not because I thought that would be a pleasant mode of conveyance, but because I saw "3d." in large letters on the outside, and I felt sure the hansom cab with the nice horse would cost a great deal more than that; and I wanted to begin at once to experience the virtuous feeling of being economical. But Philip would not consent. "You will get quite enough of omnibuses by-and-by," he said. And indeed I did.

CHAPTER XI.

OUR WEDDING JOURNEY.

FOR Philip and I were married very shortly after this, and took the week's holiday at Brighton ; and then, returning to London, subsided into a lodging in Albert Street, Regent's Park.

And here, properly, I suppose, I should end this narrative ; for with this conclusion of the doubts and difficulties of lovers in matrimony, stories generally do end.

To be sure, some people's doubts and difficulties only begin here where others' end ; but such was not the case with mine, therefore I have the less excuse for continuing ; and yet I am going to continue a little longer.

I will not say anything further, however, about our week at Brighton, for that I consider would be utterly uninteresting to the general

—or indeed any—reader. Brighton is tolerably well known already to most people; but even if it were not, although we found the place most delightful in every respect, we were not prepared on our return to give any correct account of its geographical position, physical features, and the manners and customs of its inhabitants.

It is curious why new-married people always do go travelling; because I am sure they are seldom in a mental condition to take those acute observations of men and things which is supposed to be the main object of such locomotion. But that I dare say is the reason why they always go somewhere where everybody has been before, and nobody is curious to hear anything about, and of which there would not be the slightest necessity or excuse for giving the *impressions de voyage*. My impressions of Brighton were that it was an elysium, very *very* slightly marred by a

great deal of sun, streets, and a sea upon which I went once, and was sick. Philip's, I have no doubt, were just the same, only that he did not get sick when we went on the sea ; however, his agonies of remorse when he beheld my sufferings on that occasion, I am sure were quite as bad. From which it will, I think, be admitted that our "impressions" were not worth detailing further. Our mental condition at that time I can now only characterize as having been imbecile.

But we were only imbecile for seven days ; at the end of that period we returned to London, where we were immediately called upon to resume the exercises of our intellectual faculties : Philip, at his desk in Messrs. Stillington, Stephenson & Co.'s warehouse ; and I, in the superintendence of the first floor, furnished, of 247, Albert Street, where the landlady had a second key to our cheffonier.

CHAPTER XII.

SETTLING OLD SCORES.

BUT before settling down we took one other holiday,—only one day,—and went down to Crawdour.

“Lilla! Good heavens!” exclaimed Mrs. Thayer, jumping up, and dropping everything out of her lap as I entered her drawing-room, unannounced. And then we fell on each other’s necks, and embraced and wept.

“But why,—*why* did you do so mad a thing as to run away? And why did you not come to me when you did go? But how well you look, and how nicely you are dressed!”

“I did not come to you, because I did not want to involve you and Mr. Thayer in my quarrel with my uncle and aunt. Then I saw nothing else I could do but run away; and I am very well indeed, Mary, thank you.”

"But where have you come from; and what have you been doing? Do tell me, for goodness' sake."

"Mamma, mamma!" cried Bobbie, running open-mouthed from the window, "I see him in the garden, but his whiskers is growed!"

Bobbie had not advanced much in the study of English grammar.

"Who is in the garden? What are you laughing about, Lilla? For goodness' sake, explain something to me."

I held both her hands to prevent her going to the window; while Bobbie continued to pull her dress, and exclaim, "Mamma, mamma, I see him—," etc., etc.

"Do you remember Philip Staunton, Mary?"

"Why, of course I do."

"Well, it is he who is in the garden."

"Lilla! Lilla! I don't believe—"

"What don't you believe? That I am

married to him ? But you may, for that is a certain fact ; it took place a week ago."

Mrs. Thayer released her hands from mine, and sat down.

"This is the most extraordinary thing I ever heard in all my life," she said, emphatically.

"Do you think so ? It seems to me the most natural thing in the world. And I wonder you are surprised, Mary, for I am sure you were the first who suggested the idea,—to me."

"I ! I never *dreamed* of such a thing !"

"But indeed you did, Mary. Don't you remember Bobbie's birthnight ?"

"Yes. But I never said such a thing as that. I did say—what I thought—that perhaps the ridiculous boy—"

"Pray, Mary, don't call my husband 'a ridiculous boy' !"

"Your husband ! Lilla, it is too absurd !"

"Not at all ; not at all absurd. And he

looks a great deal older, Mary, as Bobbie told you; his beard has grown very much."

"O Lilla! I never heard of such a thing! I never could have believed it if you hadn't told me yourself!"

"And yet, as I said before, you were the first who suggested the idea."

"Never! I never said such a thing. I did say that he was young and foolish, and that you ought not to flirt with him; because, of course, you could not marry him."

"But I had flirted with him a little already; and when you said that, I began to think, Why couldn't I marry him? Don't you see that was the idea? And I was young and foolish, as well as he."

"Oh, nonsense, Lilla! you won't persuade me that it was just my saying that that brought it about. And whatever he might have been, you were not so foolish."

"Don't you think so? I am afraid I was."

But besides what you said, three other things that helped to bring it about,—accidental circumstances. First, there was a shower of rain,—that was what made us meet; and then my whip, I dropped it and he picked it up; and then there was a rabbit—”

“A rabbit!” repeated Mrs. Thayer, indignantly. “Lilla, what stuff are you talking about?”

“But it is a fact. Mary, don’t you remember Bobbie’s birthnight? When he wanted to walk home with me, you said I might meet rabbits on the avenue; and then he came, and we did meet one, and I was so frightened!”

Mrs. Thayer rose suddenly from her seat, burst out laughing, and kissed me again.

“I see how it was,” she said. “Lilla, I made a great mistake. I thought Lady Crawdour’s training of you had been much more effectual than it proved to be.”

“It was an utter failure, as far as her intention in it went.”


"And instead of having fears for Philip, I ought to have had fears for you?"

"Just so. Yet your fears would not have saved me, Mary. I was doomed! I had fears for myself from the beginning, and gave myself very wise advice, and many many warnings and cautions, but they were all thrown away."

"Sit down, dear, and tell me all about it; I'm dying to know. Bobbie, run out and tell Mr. Staunton to come in; say I want him particularly."

"Has he bringed me a hobby-horse?" said Bobbie to me, the alacrity of his obedience evidently depending on my reply. "He said, when he goed away, that he'd bring me a hobby-horse when he comed again."

I was sorry to disappoint Bobbie, but truth compelled me to admit that Philip had not brought a hobby-horse with him. The prospect, however, of a large humming-top, which I



knew he had in his pocket, proved sufficient incentive to Bobbie, and he departed on his errand.

I had not much time to tell my friend any of these particulars which she was longing to hear before Philip came in. Mr. Thayer, too, being summoned by the same emissary, there was a fresh scene of astonishment to be gone through before a clear explanation could be given.

"Well, upon my word," said Mr. Thayer, when the astonishing fact that I was no longer Miss Lilla Crawdour, but the wife of his former pupil, was at last brought home to his conviction, "I never was more amazed in my life. I had not the slightest idea that you cared for each other."

"Why," said Philip, "I was in love with Lilla the first day I saw her."

"Now, who would have thought that?" said Mr. Thayer. "If you will believe me, I always

fancied they rather disliked each other than otherwise."

"I never thought they disliked each other," said his wife.

So that was got through. The next thing we did was to go up to Crawdour Hall.

This I did not look forward to as at all a pleasant visit, but I had determined to make it, and so had Philip. He indeed had at first wanted to go alone, but I not yielding a ready consent to that arrangement, he agreed that I should accompany him. By what I considered a very fortunate coincidence, as we went up the avenue we met my cousin Mountiford coming down. Poor Mounty! I had thought very little about him during the past week. But now, when I saw him again, I remembered all our old reciprocal confidences, and the many little kindnesses he had done me, and the forbearance he had shown me on many occasions, and though he had intended to marry

Miss Duchesne, I felt very soft towards my cousin.

"O Philip," I exclaimed, "here's Mountiford. I'm so glad to see the poor fellow again. I hope he'll be glad to see me."

"He behaved very shabbily by you."

"No, no, he didn't," I replied, contradicting my husband in a most unconjugal manner. "He couldn't help acting as he did."

"I don't see that. He should have refused from the beginning to take any part passive or active in such an iniquitous transaction."

"He should, and he would have done it if he had been another kind of man; but he was only himself. He's not like you, Philip; but in the main he's not a bad kind of fellow."

Philip and I had been flattering each other so persistently for the last week, that if we had both believed on the testimony of the other that we were the two most perfect human beings in the world, we could not have been much blamed.

So this smoothed down his somewhat ruffled feelings, and notwithstanding the pride of self-conscious worth, prepared him to be somewhat merciful to Mountiford Crawdour.

My cousin was walking quickly, with his eyes fixed on the ground, so he did not see us until we were just upon him ; then he started and turned very red, and I saw that in the first glance he understood the position of affairs, and knew who my companion was, and what position he held towards me.

He stopped, but I ran forward and placed my hands in his. He dropped them, coldly.

“So this was the meaning of your cutting away. You are married?”

“Yes, I am married ; but it was not the meaning—”

“You need not have joined in telling me a lie. I did not expect that from you, Lilla.”

“Say that to me, Captain Crawdour,” said Philip, who had joined us now ; “I will answer you.”

"I have nothing to say to you ; I don't know you. I speak to my cousin."

"You speak to my wife, who is not to be threatened or bullied, or bought or sold for your convenience any more, sir."

"By George," said Mountiford, turning very pale, "you are the most insolent young puppy I ever met in my life."

"Lilla, go away," said Philip, loosening my hand from his arm ; "go back to Mr. Thayer's. I will follow you."

But if this young man had wanted a wife who would yield him implicit and unquestioning obedience on every occasion, he ought never to have married me ; for I had not the slightest intention of doing it,—and certainly not on this occasion, at any rate.

Instead, I clasped both my hands round his arm again, and held them tight there. And very very much I own would I then have been pleased to have seen a member

of that Metropolitan police force, for which I had so great a regard, taking a stroll just then in Sir John Crawdour's avenue; for Philip's face was as red as Mountiford's was pale, and they were both regarding each other fixedly with that bulldog look in their eyes which makes us see how far men can sometimes go back, even mentally, to the condition of the lower animals from whom we are now told they have ascended.

But as there was not the slightest chance of any policeman,—I had acquired a wonderful confidence in policemen during my short stay in London,—being found wandering about Crawdour Park, I felt that on my interference alone it depended that a breach of the peace should not be committed.

“I won't go away; I'll stay here. You are both going to quarrel; I know you are. Mountiford, he knew no more where I was when he wrote to you than you did!”

"Is this true?" said my cousin sulkily; but his bulldog expression changing somewhat and addressing Philip instead of me.

"It is. When your cousin was driven from your father's house by treatment that cast 'indelible disgrace' on every one of you, she took refuge with a noble-hearted man,—a true friend of hers as well as mine,—who helped her and protected her, and cared for her as if he had been her father. But she had left Crawdour Hall more than a week before I knew that she was not still there."

"I suppose I am bound to believe you." Mountiford's expression changed yet still more, but his tone was very ungracious still.

"I don't care whether you believe it or not." Philip was not a bit behindhand in ungraciousness.

This offered to me a favourable opportunity to interfere again.

"Oh, don't quarrel," I said. "What is

the use? I'm sure I never blamed you, Mountiford; and he didn't want to quarrel with you, only you called him such rude names. Philip, don't look so cross; he's sorry, I'm sure he is."

"I am sorry," said Mountiford. "I said it in mistake; but he provoked it. And why didn't he give this explanation at once?"

"Because, without waiting for any explanation, you said I had told a lie, and had made my wife tell a lie. What could you expect after that?"

"I made a mistake," said Mountiford. "I am ready to grant you that. I was hurt by Lilla's want of confidence in me, as well as by what I fancied was an act of deception on her part."

"It was for your own sake that I did not confide in you, Mountiford," I said. "I thought it would only bring you into worse trouble with your father."

"I did not mind that, Lilla; you know I did not mind that."

"But I did. Now what I have done, I have done of myself. You have had no hand, act, or part in it, and cannot be blamed for it."

Mountiford stood silent a moment or two, regarding Philip and me. Then he reached forth his hand to the latter.

"I don't want to quarrel with you," he said. "I don't know you, but I dare say you are a very good fellow; and I suppose it would have been some time or another." Which I concluded was an allusion to our recent union.

Philip accepted the proffered hand.

"I don't want to quarrel, either," he said. "You used very intemperate language, Captain Crawdour; but you apologised for it, and that is enough."

Mountiford winced a little at this reply, but he did not answer it, but turned and shook hands with me.

"I've been very anxious about you, Lilla," he said.

"Didn't you get my notes?"

"Oh, yes, I got your notes, but you didn't vouchsafe much information to make me comfortable in them. But now, where are you going?"

"To see your father. To tell him that Lilla does not need the support and protection he refused her, any longer. And to tell him a little more besides."

"A capital idea!" Mountiford exclaimed, turning at once. "Come on."

I was rather surprised at his ready approval of this scheme, and so was Philip; but he soon explained it.

"Who do you think is up there?" he said, as we hurried along at a pace very much accelerated from that we had been going at before meeting him. "Duchesne."

I stopped. "O Philip."

"Why, what's the matter now?" said Mountiford. "You aren't afraid of him now; are you?"

No; I wasn't afraid of him,—exactly. I don't know, indeed, that I ever had been afraid of him; but yet I did not relish the idea of encountering him again.

"Not she," said Philip. "Why, Lilla, love,"—for I was still hesitating,—“he wouldn't dare open his lips to you now! I'd like to catch him doing it," he added, looking very ferocious, for him.

Thus encouraged, I permitted myself to be led on again.

"I'm not at all sorry he's here," said Philip.

"I'm confoundedly glad," said Mountiford. "Lilla, don't look so down in the mouth; it's a glorious opportunity for you to pay off all your old scores."

"Oh, I don't want to pay them off," I said; "I'm quite content to have escaped."

"So am I," said Philip; "but yet I shan't object to a chance for discharging a little of the debt. I'll do that part of the business, Lilla."

"H—m," said Mountiford; "all right. But, remember, the beast is old."

"I'll try and not forget it."

"Mountiford, had they any notion what became of me?"

"Not much. The first idea, of course, was of Mrs. Thayer, but it was soon found out you weren't there."

"Was uncle surprised?"

"I should think so,—every one was. They all thought you'd have given in. I didn't; but I was as much taken aback as the rest to find you had run away. Duchesne was like a madman; he and the governor quarrelled. They each said 'twas the other's fault; and the mother was blamed by them both. I kept out of the row as much as I could; but they thought at first I knew where you were, and the governor

talked of cutting me off with a shilling. "But I swore over and over again that I didn't know; and at last he believed me."

"That was why I didn't tell you, Mountiford."

"But it would have made no difference if you had," said Mountiford, coolly; "you might as well have told me, Lilla; I wouldn't have split on you."

Nor would he have let himself be cut off with a shilling, either; my cousin's conscience in these respects being of the most elastic character.

"But every one knew in a day or two that you had gone up to London. The Landon Court cook went up to town that day—"

"In the carriage with me!" I exclaimed.

"Exactly so. One of her fellow-servants wrote her an account next day of your mysterious disappearance, and she sent by return of post a description of a fellow-

traveller of hers,—a young lady, which tallied so exactly with you that there could be no mistake.

“My father,—and I, on my own account,—then wrote to you,” said Mountiford, addressing Philip. “I was perfectly satisfied with the truth of your reply, but my father did not feel so sure; and Mr. Duchesne,—who was of course privy to my father’s share in the correspondence,—utterly disbelieved it. He went to London at once to your lodgings, and cross-examined your landlady; but she averred that no young lady had ever come near the place, and that you returned every afternoon at the same hour from business, and didn’t go out again for the evening. He was at your place of business, too, and interrogated the porter, but got no more satisfactory result.”

“By Jove!” said Philip, “to think of that. Oh, if I had only known, and could have caught the old rascal!”

“On the whole,” said Mountiford, “I think it was just as well you didn’t.

“But there was one thing that set us all abroad,” said Mountiford, again addressing me. “I was inclined to think,—though I didn’t say,—that you had taken refuge with the Thavieses. Lady Fannie is just the woman to have helped you in such a scheme; and you were rather friendly together before she was married.”

“Oh, I never thought of her.”

“So it seems. But all our conjectures were upset by this woman who was in the carriage averring that she was almost sure you went away from Euston Square in a four-wheeled cab with an elderly man who had travelled up with you.”

“Good gracious,” I said, “what a story! An old farmer, who was kind to me on the journey; and she, the cross thing, was kicking and pushing me the whole time. He went off from Euston Square with a man who came

to meet him. I never saw him before that day, and never since."

"Oh, she was convinced he was the partner of your flight. She said you affected at first not to know each other, but she soon saw through the pretence. This puzzled every one, until Mr. Tooths,—who went up in the carriage too, it seems, contradicted the whole story. He had not recognised you at the time, but when the thing was talked of, remembered you. He saw you walk out of the station by yourself, or at least with a policeman who had directed you across the street. He knew the farmer too, and said it was evident you had never met before in your lives."

I was deeply interested in these details of the sensation created by my mysterious disappearance from my home, and the various rumours it gave rise to. But they were put a stop to by our arrival at Crawdour Hall.

"Let me go first and announce you," said

Mountiford, when the door was opened by the butler, who gazed with astonishment at seeing by whom he was accompanied. "They are in the library still, aren't they, Smithson,—Sir John and Duchesne? All right; come along."

We followed my cousin through the well-known hall and passages, to the well-known,—too well-known,—library door.

"Cheer up, Lilla; don't look downcast, my darling. You are free of them all now for life, thank God," Philip whispered,—symptoms of faint-heartedness on my part again making themselves apparent.

"Stay there one moment," said Mountiford to us. And then he opened the door and went in, leaving the door open behind him; so we could hear what passed.

"Lilla has come back, and wishes to see you, sir."

"Come back, has she?" we heard Sir John

say, in a tone of surly surprise. "Has she come back to her senses, too?" While Mr. Duchesne rubbed his hands exultingly, and protested that it was all right now, and everything would be made smooth in no time.

"I didn't ask her, sir," said my cousin replying to his father's interrogatory; "but I have no doubt she will tell you—and Mr. Duchesne."

"Oh, see her, Sir John,—see her at once!" implored Mr. Duchesne; "she has found what it is to be without a 'ome, an' she'll be glad to take the one that's offered her. I dare say we was mistaken; an' she had broke off with that boy before, an' has been trying governessing, or somethin' of that kind. Bring her in, Sir John, an' we'll make it all up."

"Bring her in, then," said my uncle, thus adjured. "We'll hear what she has to say for herself, at any rate."

Mountiford returned to the door.

"Come in, Lilla," he said.

And we entered.

I don't think that at the first instant my uncle perceived Philip. Mountiford,—purposely, I suppose,—managed to put himself between them.

“Well; so you're come back,” he said.
“Now—”

But Mr. Duchesne, who had risen from his seat and was advancing to greet me, suddenly turned purple in his ugly bloated face, and almost foaming at the mouth with rage, pointed to Philip who had pushed himself in front of my cousin, and advanced,—holding my hand and drawing me with him,—right up to my uncle's chair.

“Sir John, Sir John!” Rage choked Mr. Duchesne's voice, and he could say no more than that.

“Eh!” cried my uncle. “What is this, Mountiford? Who are you, sir? What brings you here?”

“My name is Staunton, and why I have come here is very easily told, Sir John Crawdour—”

But it was not so easily told; because, before Philip had got further than this, Mr. Duchesne had recovered sufficient powers of speech to stutter out—

“An impudent young beggar! Picked out of the slums by a gentleman, and reared up for charity!”

Then Philip let go my hand, and rushing at Mr. Duchesne, gripped him by the coat collar, and shook him until the purple of his face turned to black.

I screamed, and my uncle pulled the bell until the rope came down in his hands, and then shouted for the servants; we both thought Philip was going to kill Mr. Duchesne. But our fears were unfounded, or at any rate, if he had any such intentions they were frustrated by my cousin Mountiford, who,—having first

judiciously locked the door to keep the servants out,—seized Philip's arm to stay his vengeance.

“Come, come,” he cried, “hands off, young fellow! This is too much! A little kicking where it wouldn't hurt, I shouldn't mind; but this won't do! Come, hold off now!”

And, as I am sure now that Philip had no actual intention of doing more to Mr. Duchesne than punishing him a little, after one good final shake he yielded to my cousin's expostulations, and dropped him into a chair and let him go.

“What is all this? Who are you? Mountiford! Lilla! what's the meaning of this? Tell me, I order you!” cried Sir John; while my cousin went to the door and admitted Lady Crawdour, and sent away the servants, who were crowding and clamouring there; while I, in anxious horror, watched Mr. Duchesne choking and gasping back to life.

“The meaning,” said Philip, “is, that I've

just come to tell you that the girl you've had all your infernal plotting and scheming about is *my wife*. Do you hear that, Sir John Crawdour? *My wife!*"

My uncle started to ring the bell again, but the rope was down, and he couldn't. Infuriated with anger, he turned and shouted to his son—

"Mountiford! Turn out this insolent young cur. Turn him out, I say, sir!"

"I can't, sir," said my cousin, coolly, folding his arms; "he's bigger and stronger than I am, and he wouldn't let me."

"You needn't try. You may be sure I have no anxiety to stay here, or keep my wife here, Captain Crawdour," said Philip. Then to my uncle, "I just came to tell you that you are a mean, cold-blooded scoundrel, to sell a young girl, your own flesh and blood, to an old beast like him;" and he pointed to Mr. Duchesne, who, though making frightful efforts, was not yet recovered enough to speak.

“Strong language,” Mountiford whispered to me; “pitching it into the governor, by Jove.”

My cousin evidently enjoyed seeing this, which he dared not do, done by another.

“But,” continued Philip, while my uncle stared at him,—his rage for the moment overcome by his amazement at the audacity of the stranger who dared thus to beard him in his own halls,—“I only spare you because you are her flesh and blood. If you were any other man I’d serve you as I have done him,”—pointing to Mr. Duchesne; “for you are the greater rascal of the two, I believe.”

“Mountiford! turn him out! Open that door! Turn him out, I say!” my uncle absolutely foamed at the mouth, while he shook his clenched fist at Philip, and stamped on the floor in impotent rage.

“O Mountiford! for Heaven’s sake! Lilla! What is it? Who is he? Oh, tell me, somebody!” cried Lady Crawdour. Then Mr.


Duchesne was convalescent enough to gurgle out—

“A be—beggar. A bastard. A—”

But Philip turned round, and stepping up to him,—

“Do you want your breath stopped again, sir?” he said. “For I swear if you say another word about me, I’ll do it,—and more effectually this time.” Then Mr. Duchesne shrank back into his chair in silence.

“And you may open the door, Captain
• Crawdour as soon as you like, for I am quite ready to go now ; I have said what I came to say. I will only add, Sir John, that had I had the faintest idea of the treatment to which you and your wife and that vile old man were subjecting your niece, though I had been the beggar he has falsely called me, she should have left your house long before she did ; for any home I could have given her would have been better and happier for her than this. I




was only my utter ignorance of the base advantage you were taking of her dependence on you, that made me dream of waiting until my position and fortune should be something like what I vainly imagined you would expect for her. But now, when I know the destiny to which you assigned her," pointing to Mr. Duchesne," I know that any hardship she might have had to undergo with me would have been preferable to your care and guardianship. I think you as bad, Sir John Cawdour,—or worse,—than the most drunken old sot in a London gin-shop, that drives his daughter on the streets to get him drink. Come, Lilla," and Philip drew my hand within his arm, and turned and walked to the door, which Mountiford, going before, opened for our departure.

It was rather awkward for Sarah and Mrs. Lukins, that when my cousin opened the door, they were discovered outside it, engaged in a

silent but energetic struggle for supremacy at the keyhole. The cook was there too, but in the background, without a chance of improving her position, and obliged to be content with what information she could obtain orally of what was going on inside; which, however, must have been a good deal, as every one there who spoke, spoke very loudly. Also, I fancied,—but it might have been only fancy,—that I saw the butler and Mat retreating in the distance.

Mrs. Lukins was very much taken aback at her detection, and murmuring something about “thinking m’ lady called,” retired,—not beyond earshot,—but Sarah, casting all fears of wrath and dismissal to the wind, seized my hand in hers and kissed it.

“But never, never shall I forget the turn as I got when I went at half after nine an’ see as you wasn’t there. An’ cook says, ‘Tell them to search the pond, for it wasn’t herself at all, but her own sperrit as come to my bedside



last night, all in white, and a weepin', with the candle in her hand!"

"No, no, Sarah; it was I myself! Good-bye, Sarah. How is Joe? Oh, I'm very glad. Good-bye, dear Sarah." I could not stay to say more, for Philip, impatient to be gone, was dragging me forward; he had recognised Sarah, and greeted her cordially, but he was anxious to shake the dust of Crawdour Hall from his feet as soon as possible.

It was very soon done, and we went out in the avenue again, and I breathed freely. I had taken no part in this fray, but the sight of the old battle-field revived the memory of former unequal combats which I had sustained there, in my mind, and the atmosphere of the place was loathsome to me.

"My darling, this has distressed you! But I couldn't keep cool and quiet, Lilla, when I saw those two cowardly old ruffians face to face," said Philip, in an exculpatory manner.

"Oh, I didn't mind it, Philip,—much. And I oughtn't to have minded it at all, I've gone through it so often, and all alone, Philip."

"My darling! if you had only told me."

"I didn't want to vex you, Philip; you said we should wait, and you would be patient, and I thought I would try and be patient too."

"But I didn't know what it meant for you. I only saw the fine house, and knew you had enough to eat and drink, and good clothes to wear, and servants to wait on you, and relations about you; and though I knew they did not love you as I did, I never thought they would have treated you as they did."

"No; nobody would think it. And then, Philip, I wasn't strong enough to shake Mr. Duchesne. I was often longing to be able to hit him, or do something to him, but I didn't know how."

"Your cousin interrupted me too soon; a shake or two more wouldn't have made much

difference. I might as well have given him enough when I went about it."

"Oh, I think you gave him enough, Philip," I said. Because, though I had been frightened at the time, now that it was all over I was not sorry Mr. Duchesne had received some of that corporal punishment which want of physical strength and deference to public prejudice prevented my bestowing upon him. My cousin Mountiford seemed determined to earn to-day that legacy of a shilling which his father had before threatened to cut him off with, for he overtook us now.

"Where are you both off to now?" he said.

"Home, back to London; not to see Croudour Hall for a long time again, please God," Philip replied.

"It is a delicate question," said Mountiford. "But—aw—might I ask,—aw—now that you are married, Have you got anything to live upon?"

"We have," said Philip.

"Enough?"

"Enough for my position. And your cousin has accepted my position; and though it is not as good in some respects as that she was born in, I hope to make it a far happier one to her than that proved to be."

"Philip," I said, "would you go on a little way for a moment, while I speak to Mountiford?"

Philip was certainly the most amiable and confiding of husbands. He walked on in obedience to my request. He looked as if he would rather have stayed, but still he walked on.

"H—um," said Mountiford; "his position. A clerk in Stillington, Stephenson & Co.'s."

"Now, don't, Mounty. If I do not mind that, you need not."

"Enough! I wonder what he calls enough? I thought it was all a piece of nonsense. I never thought it would end like this."

"I am happy, Mountiford; I assure you I am perfectly happy."

"Oh, I don't at all doubt it, and so is he; and so are those sparrows making a row there overhead: but wait until you have a dozen children about you."

I began to laugh, the first time,—though I had laughed a good deal of late,—since I re-entered my uncle's domain.

"But we may not have a dozen children, Mountiford; we may not have any."

"Oh, yes, you will; poor people always have,—lots of them, too. By Jove, to think of you with a troop of them about you, with their toes out of their boots, and clamouring for more mutton."

It was not a cheerful picture, certainly, and my cousin as he suggested it did not look at all cheerful over it; but yet I began to laugh again.

"Perhaps things won't be quite so bad. At

any rate, it is done now. Can't you think of something pleasanter to say? See, he is coming back."

"Yes, I see. I don't want to be unkind, Lilla. I have nothing to say against the young fellow himself."

"Haven't you anything to say for him?" My intellectual equilibrium was not yet quite restored, I was craving for some sort of praise of Philip from my cousin.

He gave it to me, evidently perceiving the condition of my mental faculties.

"Oh, well. You were determined to make a fool of yourself, and marry a beggar; but I grant, since you would do it, that you chose a very favourable specimen to make the experiment with."

This might seem to others a very doubtful compliment; but I knew my cousin, and knew it was quite as much as could be expected from him.

“And I hope you will be happy,” he added. “Something may turn up; you may get a lot of tin somehow.”

Philip was drawing near.

“I used to wish sometimes I had had you. I was always fond of you, Lilla; but the boiled mutton and suet-dumpling business wouldn't have suited me. I didn't think it would have suited you, either; but perhaps I was mistaken.”

Philip was very near now.

“One thing I was wrong in. I should have said, the first day this Duchesne business was entered on, what I said the last, the day before you went away. I knew that Lilla, though I was angry when this young fellow said it to me to-day in the way he did. I let things take their course; I thought they would right themselves. Do you forgive me?”

Most heartily I did. Seeing, too, the way things had righted themselves, I could have no difficulty at all; but, even when they had

been gloomiest, I had been inclined to take the most merciful view possible of my cousin's conduct in this transaction.

Philip was so close upon us that Mountiford had to whisper his last words in my ear,—

“And Lilla, if you are ever very hard up, write to me. I can always squeeze out some cash somewhere.”

“Oh, thank you, Mounty, but I shall not want it; I am sure I shall not.”

“I'm not so sure. At any rate, remember.”

“Are you ready, Lilla? The train leaves at a quarter-past.”

So ended my last private conference with my cousin Mountiford. Philip and I bade him good-bye then. My husband was not quite as cordial to him as I would have wished, or as Mountiford would have wished, and would have responded to, I think; but still, he was quite civil, and that perhaps was as

much as could be expected of him under the circumstances.

Then we hurried forward, not to lose our train.

But, before we had gone many yards, we were stopped again; Mat, apparently by accident, issued forth upon our path.

He was not as impulsive as Sarah, he only touched his hat silently; but his face, as he did so, wore a smile that was more expressive than words.

Of course we should stop to speak to this good friend; and a very warm greeting, one equally gratifying to both sides passed between us.

"I allus knew it would end in this," said Mat; nodding his head, oracularly, as he grasped one of our hands in each of his.

"Did you, indeed?" said Philip. "You were always very good to us, Mat, I know."

"Not at all, sir; not at all. Only, seeing as

how things was going,—not as I seed nothing as I wasn't meant to see,—but knowing it, as it were, I wasn't going for to make myself a party an' a spy for them as should know their place, an' not think for to push themselves into the 'ouses or lands of their betters, that please God they'll be turned out of again; an' to marry a young lady, as myself,—meaning no disrespect,—was as fit to be her husband."

This was a very involved speech of Mat's; but I understood it, and so I hope will the reader. Mat, in his own way, was as great a conservative as Lord Lesham.

"I allus does my dooty," said Mat; "but it wasn't no part of my dooty to say anything to nobody about anything as I might see, or to see anything as I didn't need to see. I might have my own opinions, but my opinions wasn't nothing to nobody, only they always was as this was how 'twould end; and glad I am that so it has."

And then Mat, giving each of our hands another grasp, departed suddenly; having made two of the longest speeches I had ever known to proceed from his mouth.

And then we went forward on our way again, having to go very fast now, lest we should miss the train.

But we didn't miss it; we were just in time. However, we were destined not to leave Crawdour without being "interviewed" yet once again. We were seated in the carriage, and the train was almost about to move, when my cousin Mountiford appeared on the platform, panting and breathless. He thrust his head into the carriage where we were.

"By Jove,—I only just thought of it,—ran all the way after you to tell it,—news of the day,—entirely forgot it in the excitement of the row,—Duchesne got a letter from old Bright to-day,—Lord Texworth turned up again, alive and well,—plenty of money to buy back the

property,—Duchesne got notice to quit in twelve months! Jolly; isn't it?"

The guard whistled, and the train went on.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON OUR WAY THROUGH THE WORLD.

AND here again, I say, I suppose that I ought to end ; if I adhered to the right rules of story-telling, this history of mine should be brought to a close. For my marriage was the turning-point in my life ; and at the turning point it is the usual practice of narrators to leave off, content that their readers should know how the corner was turned, but not favouring them with a peep round it afterwards.

, But I am inclined to linger a little ; and, standing here, holding my reader,—whoever he or she for the time being may be,—by the buttonhole, as it were, detain him or her for a short time longer, just enough to afford a slight glimpse into my after-life, before we bid each other a final farewell.

Well, then, as to this life ; of course it was

very different from my former one. Everything was altered. Places, people, associations,—all were new and unfamiliar ; the very things I ate and drank, and the hours of meals, were novel and strange.

That is,—instead of living in a Hall, surrounded by other Halls, Lodges, Courts, Houses, etc.,—I lived in a first-floor furnished, a second-floor overhead, and a parlour, all likewise furnished, and “To Let,” underneath, in a neighbourhood supposed to be convenient for the City, by reason of frequent ’buses running near, and rendered attractive by a large public-house in its immediate vicinity.


As to people, my nearest companions had been a baronet and his wife; besides which I had been accustomed to constant and familiar intercourse with persons of equal or nearly equal standing ; and, at any rate, occasional association with lords and ladies of high degree. Now, my most intimate companion was a

merchant's clerk ; my most intimate friend, only the merchant himself ; the most exalted of my acquaintance, a lawyer and his wife,— Mr. and Mrs. Gorman ; whilst I associated on terms of social equality with other persons of very inferior degree, occasionally even being compelled to hold intimate converse with the landlady, who had a second key to my cheffonier.


Then I dined at one, I took tea at six, I supped at nine. I never had minced veal now, served in a silver dish, nor flowers round my cold shoulder of mutton, and my landlady called a stew "a 'ash." I cannot say her "'ashes" were much nicer than those of Crawdour Hall ; but, at any rate, except in name, they were not at all nastier. I ate water-cresses at tea, and shrimps and muffins, and even crumpets, all in their appropriate seasons ; and at supper I drank beer fetched in a jug from the attractive public-house.

I had no horse to ride now, nor any carriage to drive in ; but I travelled frequently in the convenient threepenny 'buses, and occasionally in a frowzy four-wheeler.

It may perhaps be expected that the first experience of these vulgarities of life must have been very shocking to my refined sensibilities, these things being generally supposed to be so to young ladies of aristocratic birth and gentle breeding. I read once in a romance, of a lady, one of the upper ten, who having degraded herself by marrying a literary man of high repute, whom by some mischance she had fallen in love with, was so shocked when she found that some of his friends wished to smoke when they spent an evening with him, and that their wives were ill-bred enough to be interested in the price of beef and mutton, that she felt compelled, notwithstanding her affection, to divorce herself from his home



and society. She had made up her mind to the endurance of some hardships, such as living in a fourteen-room house and having to speak to his mother, as the penalty of marrying the cleverest man she had ever met ; but she was quite unprepared to undergo such trials as I have mentioned. To be sure she was afterwards brought to see that she had unwarily made some promises and taken some vows upon her which bound her to a good deal of possible suffering, and having still a kind of sneaking fondness for the clever man, she was induced to return to him; which self-sacrifice so touched the heart of the author in whose hands of course the destiny of both her and the clever man entirely lay, that he forthwith bestowed an ample but unexpected fortune upon them, which enabled the fortunate husband, who was of course equally sensible of the delicate generosity of his wife's behaviour, to remove




her to an elegant and refined retirement, twenty miles from the chance intrusion of his vulgar clever friends, where her feelings were never more wounded by having the price of her dinner mentioned, and where they lived a life of uninterrupted bliss.

But with myself it was quite different. Lady Crawdour when she was angry used often to say, I remember, that I was "born with low tastes," and that I had "none of the feelings and ideas proper to my station;" opinions which were confirmed by my undue civility to the Brights, my familiarity with Dr. Jones, my close friendship with the curate's wife, and by an unhappy proclivity which I had displayed at an early age for dancing with younger sons, and settled beyond a doubt by my refusal to sacrifice personal feeling for the advantage of my family when I would not marry Mr. Duchesne. And I suppose Lady Crawdour must have been

right, and that I really was a degenerate scion of my house; for certain it is that I accommodated myself to my new mode of existence in a most wonderful manner. I did feel a little shy at first in walking about the streets by myself, and very queer when I went in omnibuses; but both sensations quickly wore off. I soon felt as much at home in Tottenham Court Road as I used to do in the village of 'Crawdour, and was quite at my ease with "twelve inside, fourteen out." And I became like most of my present acquaintance, deeply interested in the price of butcher's meat, learned in the qualities of butter, bacon, and cheese, critical in the freshness of vegetables, and thoroughly versed in the general value, weight, and measure of almost every article of domestic consumption. And I actually took a pleasure in this new branch of study and acquired knowledge in it with a rapidity that astonished

myself almost as much as it did Philip and Mr. Stillington, for I am sure they had both felt at first,—though they did not express them,—a few misgivings on this point. So much so, that it would have been really quite a pity for that reason alone if I had not married a poor man, for then this genius of mine—the only one I possessed—would never have been called forth and developed as it now has.

It may have been partly for this reason that some of my cousin Mountiford's gloomy forebodings as to my future were not fulfilled. For several years of our married life Philip and I certainly were not rich; indeed we were what Mountiford and others amongst the people I had left would decidedly consider poor, but we were certainly never reduced to any of those uncomfortable straits which my cousin had foreseen with his "mind's eye."



Some persons may be curious to know how we managed to do this, but I may as well say at once that on this subject I do not intend to enter into any more minute details than those I have given ; my preference in this, and on all other matters relating to the conduct in life, being for broad and general principles, rather than for strict rules and dogmas on small trivial points, which must be different to different people. Once get the sound truth concerning anything into the head of any reasonable and rational man or woman, and then, when the small point arises, they will be sure to know how to act for the best in it ; that is what I think. And so here, as a not inappropriate place, I lift up my voice in protest against, and condemnation of, certain small manuals occasionally thrust upon the public, informing it " How I managed " this, and " How I managed " that, with the direct object of

teaching every one that so they must manage their concerns or woe betide them. If a woman is convinced that it is her duty to look after her domestic affairs and give the best ability she is gifted with to regulating them, and understands the sound principle of "waste not, want not," she will practise the utilization of "dripping, suet, bones and cinders," without requiring a sixpenny dissertation on the subject; if she is not, the reading of an infallible creed embodying the dogmas of a kitchen saint is not likely to make her.

But another of my cousin's prognostics came much nearer to fulfilment, that concerning the number of our future offspring. He pictured me with twelve children. Well, I did not have twelve children, but I went very near it, for I had nine, all boys.

"What a frightful thing," I fancy I hear somebody say. Perhaps it is; but boys are

like other frightful things, one gets 'used to them. Six are rather dreadful, but after six, one gets case-hardened, and does not mind much how many more there are.

There was nothing very remarkable about these nine boys, except perhaps the first. He was remarkable,—all first babies are, and he was no exception to the rule. For one thing, he was a great deal finer child than any other child that anybody else had ever seen, that no one ever doubted; then he was peculiarly sweet-tempered, as all first babies are, very intelligent, and the image of all his handsomest relations.

It was a never-failing source of amusement and delight, this first baby; indeed I must own that over him we relapsed considerably into that condition of imbecility from which, in the months that intervened between our honeymoon and his appearance, we had tolerably well succeeded in emerging.

Mr. Stillington took a deep interest in the baby. He kissed it the first time he saw it, which was at a very early period of its existence, when its age in fact could be counted not even by days, but only by hours. I was not surprised at this, although when the fact was told to me I felt a sudden increase of sympathetic affection for Mr. Stillington, but Philip was. Philip had kissed it himself of course, but Mr. Stillington was not the kind of man he would have expected to care about babies, he said.

However, whether he cared for other people's babies or not, he certainly cared for ours. With intense interest he watched with us the first efforts of the baby's dawning genius manifested in the attempt to catch bluebottle flies on the window panes, the little fat uncertain fingers always descending on the glass far wide of the bluebottle, who continued to take his stroll quite undisturbed.

But indeed nothing could be better than Mr. Stillington's whole conduct towards us. Not only—notwithstanding all he had done for us—did he never attempt to control us in any way ; but he never warned, admonished, reproved, or even advised, unless he was specially asked, which was indeed but very seldom, as with the comfortable conceit of youth we were always quite satisfied of our capabilities to manage our own business.

But he very often came to see us. At first he only came by special invitation, but afterwards much more frequently, so frequently, that we got to calling one armchair, Mr. Stillington's chair, which seemed to afford him considerable gratification. He seemed at first to think that we should not want his company, but afterwards he became convinced that we were very glad to see him, which was indeed the case ; for our period of imbecility over, without being at all tired of each other's

society, the variety of a friend calling to see us in the evening was not at all disagreeable.

He was rather peculiar in some of his ways, Mr. Stillington was. Though so intimate with him, we really knew very little about him. Except Mrs. and Mr. Gorman he never mentioned the name of any friend or acquaintance of his, and really I began to believe, and Philip agreed with me, that he had none. And though he came to see us so often in our own home, he never offered to accompany us abroad; and once or twice when I suggested his doing so he excused himself on pleas that evidently were only excuses, whereupon I never suggested it again. Once indeed, very shortly after we were married, he escorted me somewhere—the place I now forget, where I very much wished to go, Philip being unable to come with me. Somebody then came up and spoke to him, grasping him by the arm, with the exclamation, “Why,

old fellow, where on earth have you risen from ?" to which remark Mr. Stillington replied, " I think you are mistaken, sir ; I am not acquainted with you," and pushed in amongst the crowd. When I told Philip, he said it was "just his way, he was always a misanthropic kind of fellow," which surprised me, as I had never found him a misanthropic kind of a fellow, but it made Mr. Stillington a greater mystery to me than he had ever been before, and he always had been a mystery to me more or less.

But whoever else he was misanthropical to, he was not misanthropical to me. Philip used to say, and pretend to be jealous about it, that I had completely ousted him from his guardian's affections. Though indeed Philip was not inclined to think, and never had been, that Mr. Stillington had ever entertained any particular affection for him, but this was an opinion I could not agree in.

Mr. Stillington petted me certainly ; he called me his "dear child," and "dear girl," and always kissed me when he came and when he went away, and he brought me flowers, and nice fruits, and new books, and various other little luxuries which our means would not have afforded,—indeed the only luxuries I got were from him,—while he had never been known to use a term of endearment to Philip, and though he had done everything for him to enable him to make his way in the world, he had never bestowed upon him any unnecessary and needless indulgences.

But yet I always believed that his guardian cared more for Philip than Philip thought he did ; I was even inclined to believe, notwithstanding appearances, that he cared more for Philip than he did for me.

But he was a very odd kind of man altogether. Many evenings when he came to see us he would not speak half a dozen

words for the whole time he stayed, but would sit silently in his chair in the corner, while he talked, or read, or Philip dozed and I worked, but I always thought he watched Philip more than he did me.

And he said very odd things sometimes.

One day when he called—he did not often call in the daytime—he said some, what I thought, very odd things, asked some strange questions, and he was not at all given to asking questions.

I was not in a particularly equable or happy frame of mind this day. We were better off now, and had a nurse and servants of our own. But though I was glad to have my household economy removed from the dominion of a landlady who had a key to my cheffonier, and to be independent of the assistance of a maid-of-all-work who had a “parlour” and “second floor furnished” dependent on her likewise, a house and

servants I found brought trials and distresses of their own.

On this particular day the kitchen chimney was smoking, and the sweeps had disappointed ; the baby was cutting a tooth with vexation of spirit, and nurse and housemaid had quarrelled, and each given notice to quit if the other stayed, and the laundress had not brought home the clean clothes. It was not then exactly the time for Mr. Stillington to say out of a brown study :

“ Well, Lilla, are you quite satisfied and contented with everything as it is ? ”

“ Indeed I’m sure I’m not,” I replied at once, “ and I’d like to know who could be satisfied and contented that is plagued with servants ! Such a temper as Mary Anne has ! Really I can hardly blame nurse, only I think she need not want to leave me now just as the poor child is getting troubled with his teeth.

"Oh, only servants, nothing worse than that, Lilla."

"I don't know what *can* be worse in a family? And there's the kitchen chimney, we shall not be able to cook a bit of dinner to-day. And I don't know what can have become of Mrs. Irons, unless that she got drunk and let our basket drop off the cart."

"Oh, minor ills, minor ills," said Mr. Stillington, "don't vex yourself about such things as these, my dear."

"But I can't help vexing myself," I said, "Those abominable sweeps! Poor Philip will come home, and nothing for dinner but a bit of cold meat."

"Let him eat cold meat," said Mr. Stillington; "it is plenty good enough for him."

"But indeed I don't think it is," I said, "Not but that he is so good, he is always quite contented with anything I give him."

"Well, so he ought to be."

"I don't know that he ought to be, but he is. And that is the more reason that I don't like to put him off with a bad dinner."

"Well, well," said Mr. Stillington, "it won't kill him for one day at any rate. But when I asked you if you were contented and satisfied with your life, I didn't mean in these small particulars, I meant as a whole; if it has answered your expectations? If you are as happy as you expected to be? If you have no wish to have it different?"

I had got so perfectly used to my life, that it never occurred to me to ask myself if it had answered my expectations, or did I wish that it was different? But when Mr. Stillington asked it, I repeated it to myself, and when I did, it seemed to me an utterly ridiculous and senseless question for him to ask. It was most provoking that these horrid sweeps had not come and cleaned the kitchen chimney, but still,—

"Why surely," I said, "of course I am. How could you think I might not be, Mr. Stillington? I have everything I could wish for in the world, and we are hardly ever ill any of us."

"That's all right," said Mr. Stillington, looking pleased, and somewhat relieved, as if the weight of some doubt had been lifted off his mind by my reply. "But I did not know. Some young people are apt to take too rose-coloured a view of what their life is to be at the beginning, and they are disappointed afterwards, and then maybe wish that it was something different."

"But I don't wish mine to be anything different."

"I am glad to hear it. Not that I would have blamed you if you had."

"But you ought to blame me; putting Philip aside, it would be the grossest ingratitude to you."

"You owe me nothing ; nothing, child,—less than nothing."

"I owe you almost everything, I think. Philip works hard, but he could never have got the position he has but for you."

"Nothing, nothing," said Mr. Stillington ; "every man is entitled to what he earns. I have given him nothing but his due."

I could not agree with Mr. Stillington on this point, but did not press it further.

"Well," I said, "I should be ungrateful to Philip, for he has done everything he could to make me happy. And I should be utterly silly besides ; because I did it all of myself, and had no right even to expect that things should all have gone as straight and smooth as they have done."

"There is sound sense in that," said Mr. Stillington. "But now, about Philip ; is he quite contented and satisfied, too ?"

"Oh, he is always contented with everything."

“Always?”

“Always. He was vexed a little last night, to be sure; but that was nothing.”

“What was he vexed about last night?—if you don’t mind telling me.”

“Oh, not at all. It was the Tomkinses,—the people who live next door. They will keep such a lot of horrid cats; and Philip had settled the garden so nicely.”

“Oh, is that all?” said Mr. Stillington, irreverently interrupting this tale of woe. “If Mr. Philip has nothing worse to trouble him than Tomkins’s cats, I don’t think he’s much to be pitied.”

Though I believe Mr. Stillington to be fond of Philip, he had not, I had to own to myself, as tender a sympathy for him as he displayed for me. I thought poor Philip was really to be pitied for having all his nice geraniums and his mignonette-seed rooted up by Tomkins’s cats.

And another thing very odd about Mr. Stillington was that though I often tried to get him to do it, he would never tell me anything more about his old love, and her husband, Philip's father. Philip knew as little about them as I did, and showed a rather reprehensible want of curiosity on the subject, only "If my father did anything bad, and I am afraid he did, I would rather not hear it," he used to say when I spoke to him on the subject; and then I used to think perhaps he was right, and that we both knew enough about it. But we never either of us believed Mr. Duchesne's base insinuations; we had Mr. Stillington's word for their falsehood.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHANGES—AND REVELATIONS.

TEN years! We were married ten years.

What had happened to the other persons who had played a part in this history in those ten years.

My cousin Mountiford went to India with his regiment shortly after my marriage; he stayed there seven years and married the daughter of a rich indigo planter; his father died, and he returned home and left the army and has lived at Crawdour Hall since. He comes to see me when he comes to London, and brings his wife too. She is older than he is, and rather plain, but a quiet gentle woman. He is very polite and respectful—for him—to her; and she seems very fond of him, but not very happy. They have no children; he might be more than polite and

respectful to her, I fancy, if they had ; and she would look happier. He is always very friendly to Philip, and Philip gets every year more friendly to him. Lady Crawdour,—old Lady Crawdour now,—lives with them at the Hall. I rather pity Mountiford's wife for this, too ; but I think she makes a more amiable daughter-in-law than I should have done.

Mr. Duchesne had to leave Texton ; to which Lord Texworth however did not return himself, but put it under the charge of a housekeeper, who keeps it all in order against any time that he may choose to come. Having satisfied Mr. Duchesne's lawyer of his existence, he returned to the Continent, where he will remain, Mr. Bright says, he thinks always ; where on the Continent, Mr. Bright does not tell people definitely.

Miss Duchesne married Lord John Randolph, who spent as much of her fortune as he could get at, and then treated her so cruelly that

she had to return to her father, who had married also, a rather *passée* beauty of noble birth but most impoverished fortune. But Mr. Duchesne did not prove quite as complaisant a husband as from the difference in their rank, years, and personal appearance she had expected he would. Notwithstanding all his fine promises to me, he did consider there was to be some limit to the expenditure of his cash in fine clothes, jewels, equipages, entertainments, etc. And he showed no sort of generosity at all in another matter,—that of lovers. He set his face against them,—decidedly against them,—which his wife didn't. Particularly he set it against one,—whom particularly she didn't. An old lover,—that is, a lover of her unmarried days, but not old in years. Mr. Duchesne employed detectives both professional and amateur; amongst the latter a waiting-maid, who developed an especial genius for espionage; a footman of

to meet talents in that line, and a Machiavellian age. The Lord Chief Justice Wilde,—God bless the Lord Chief Justice Wilde,—heard that, and he said Mr. Duchesne free to marry again. He would say that he does not show any signs of hesitation to try the experiment again.

Mr. Thavers are at Crawdour still. Bobbie will get into Christ's Hospital, by Mr. Seagrave, and once a month Philip and I mortified ourselves by having him to spend his holiday with us. Now he has been taken into the office, and we are afflicted with him every alternate Sunday at dinner. Sarah is married to Joe Todd. Mrs. Lukins went to the church to see the ceremony, and went into hysterics of spite, in the porch, at its conclusion.

And Dr. Jones married Polly Bright. Augusta still stands "on the bridge at midnight." Julia Grace, it is thought likely, will be married yet to her father's partner, who has

been paying his attentions to her for about eleven years.

“Philip, don’t you think Mr. Stillington looks very ill?”

“Well, he is not what he used to be, certainly; but he says there is nothing the matter with him.”

“I don’t believe him; and I don’t believe that he thinks so himself. He looks shockingly ill; he eats hardly anything. And when he sinks back in that chair in the evening, he seems as if he would never have strength to rise out of it again.”

“He is up to no work at all, I know,” said Philip. “He comes just as usual; but when he has looked over a few letters, he sinks back, as you say, in his chair, and stays there for the day, mostly. But I don’t see anything he can do.”

“I wish he would come and live with us. He does not mind the children, and he could

have the little sitting-room all for himself. Then I might persuade him not to go to the office; I am sure you can do everything that is wanted there now (in the ten years Philip had become junior partner); and I could look after him a little, try and get him to eat, and see that he is comfortable. I am sure Mrs. Brown does nothing for him."

"A very good plan, Lilla, if you could carry it out. But I am afraid he will not let you."

• "Shall I try, Philip?"

"Try by all means, my dear; but I am afraid it will be no use."

And it was no use.

"No, no, my child. Thank you for thinking of it, Lilla; but I shall do very well where I am,—for the present."

"You are afraid you would not be comfortable. But, indeed, I am sure I could do anything for you,—a great deal better than Mrs. Brown does."

"I don't doubt it; I am only afraid you would make me too comfortable."

"Oh, if that is all, you will come; won't you? Say you will, Mr. Stillington. Indeed you do not know how anxious it makes me, to think of your being there all by yourself."

"Why, I am used to being by myself. I have been by myself so long, Lilla, that a little time, more or less, will make no difference."

"Well; but if you will come for a short time; just until you get well and strong again?"

Mr. Stillington shook his head, and smiled. "It wouldn't be worth while coming for a short time; and it may be but a very, *very* short time, Lilla. No; we will let things be as they are for the present. Changes will come some time; but we have been very happy as we are—have we not, Lilla? Good-bye, my daughter. I will call you so, for you have been a daughter to me."

"I would be, if you would let me, sir; but you won't."

"You have been, and are still, in the best sense of the word. And though I have not called you so before, I have always regarded you as such."

"I know you have; no father could have been kinder or better to me than you have been."

"Lilla, twelve months hence ask yourself if you believe that, and can say it from your heart."

"I shall always believe it, and always say it, with my whole heart."

"I pray God you may."

Only the next day!

Philip did not come home at six o'clock, as usual. He was always remarkably punctual, but still for half an hour I could not be anxious.

But the two eldest boys who dined with us

were anxious; they were very hungry, and they stood at the window watching eagerly for their father's appearance.

"I see him!" "No, that's not him, that's Mr. Smith." "What makes him so late, I wonder?" "Mamma, may I run to the corner, and look down the road?"

I would not consent to young Phil's running to the corner to look down the road, but suggested cold meat and potatoes in the kitchen for him and his brother, if their appetites would not permit them to wait with patience for a little longer. Which suggestion however was not taken, and they stayed at the window watching and conjecturing.

Seven,—a quarter-past seven,—half-past seven, I was about to turn the suggestion into a command, and order the boys below to get their dinner from the cook, when little Mounty called out—

"Here he is! Mamma, mamma, here he is!"

"Are you sure you are not mistaken again, Mounty?"

"No, no, mamma, it is he himself! But he looks *queer*, mamma."

I had heard of people tumbling off the tops of omnibuses, through climbing up while the vehicles were in motion. I had heard of people falling, getting out of carriages on the Metropolitan railway before the trains stopped at the platforms. I had heard of people knocked down by hansom cabs, bolting across dangerous crossings in the city. Philip was an imprudent young man still, and in these matters never remembered that he was the father of a family. I started from my seat and ran to the window, thinking of concussions and broken collar-bones! Mounty was right, it was Philip, and he did look queer. His hair was disordered, he was without his umbrella and newspaper, he had no gloves on, and his face was very pale. But still,

somehow, the moment I looked at him, the idea of any accident by omnibus, Metropolitan railway, or hansom cab, having happened to him vanished from my mind ; though another fear, worse than broken collar-bones, took possession of it instead. I ran to the door to meet him.

“ O Philip, you have some bad news.”

“ Very, very bad news. The worst possible to me, since you are all well.”

“ Mr. Stillington ?”

“ Yes; you will never see him alive again, Lilla.”

The boys were sent to the kitchen after all to eat their dinner. Philip and I wanted none. He stood beside me while I wept, and told me how death had bereft us of our friend.

“ He looked rather worse than usual, but he said nothing. It was board-day, and I was away from twelve o'clock. When I got

back, they said he hadn't left his room since, nor rung ; and Thayer was thinking of making some excuse to go in, and see if anything was the matter, when I arrived. I knocked twice, but he didn't answer ; so I went in, and there he was, lying, half out of his chair, with his arm hanging down, and his hand touching the ground, and the paper lying next it just where he dropped it. I knew he was dead at once. All the fellows came in, and we sent for a doctor, but of course it was no use ; he had been dead two hours at least, so the doctor said."

That was the saddest evening I had known for ten years.

Philip had to go out again immediately. I sent the boys to bed, and sat and cried by my lonely fireside.

"Lilla, I have strange news to tell you !"

At another time I should have been eager to hear it, but what he had told me on his

return yesterday had taken away my appetite for news.

“Well, Philip?” I replied, listlessly.

“Lilla, do you know who Mr. Stillington was?”

The question was an extraordinary one. I could not suppose my husband capable of a jest, at such a time, and on such a subject; but then what could such a question mean?

“Why, Philip, he was Mr. Stillington.”

“No, Lilla,—he was Lord Texworth.”

I was not listless now.

“Philip, Philip! you are dreaming!”

“I am not. Gorman telegraphed to Mr. Bright last night; they both came to me to-day and told me,—all.”

“All?”

“Yes,—all. I have more to tell you. O Lilla! he was my father.” Then Philip covered his face with his hands, and wept. I had never seen him weep before.

“O Philip, this cannot be! Surely, surely he would have told us!”

“It is true, Lilla,—quite true. See!—this was in his desk. We opened it to-day, and found it the first thing, lying on the top of all.”

It was a letter addressed to Philip, in Mr. Stillington’s hand-writing. I opened it at once, and read it.

“MY SON, MY DEARLY BELOVED SON,—Can you believe that you have been that to me, remembering how I have brought you up and how little of love I have ever shown you? And yet you have been. I did try at first to wean myself from the only earthly affection I possessed, but I could not do it; and though I hid it from you, I have loved you, Philip, as dearly as any father ever loved his child. I hid your rank from you too, at first, because I saw no prospect before you but a life of hard work and obscurity, for which the

knowledge that you were to possess an empty title, might have given you a distaste ; afterwards, because I saw you happy in your then condition ; more perhaps,—and for this, my son, I ask you to pardon me,—because I shrank from what it would have entailed upon myself. If you could have taken my place then, I would, but you could not ; and to become Lord Texworth again was an idea I loathed and shrank from with abhorrence. But I have not defrauded you, Philip, nor your children. I leave you more than all of yours that I squandered so recklessly in my youth. And I leave you besides a legacy of sound principle, of wisdom and prudence, of industry and frugality, which, to my cost, I did not inherit with my title and estates. You have gained these things, Philip, from the life I fixed and kept you in ; and, without them, my wealth and rank only led me on to ruin. For the sake of them, if you think I have

done you wrong else, forgive me, Philip. I do not ask your wife to forgive me,—her own heart will ask her ; and I feel no doubt now of the answer. She, if any one, will understand all that has been in my mind,—all that my heart has felt towards you both and your children ; though my lips have been silent all these years. You will hear more of my story from others ; much that even now, standing, as I feel myself, on the brink of the grave, I cannot bring myself to write of.

Your affectionate father,

TEXWORTH."

"My poor, poor father!" said Philip. And he bent his head, and hid his face again.

"Oh, if we had but known! we would have kept the secret,—he would not have wanted to change ; but we would have been so different to him, Philip."

"You were always fond of him, Lilla, and


you showed it ; but I,—how cold and indifferent I must have seemed.”

And we grieved even more bitterly than before over the man who yesterday had laid down his burden of silent sorrow for ever.

For a heavy burden it had been, and hard to be borne. A burden of remorse for the death of her he had loved truly and fondly ; but a death he knew had been hastened, if not caused, by the sorrow and suffering she had undergone through him. She was a gentle, loving woman, but of fragile constitution, both physical and mental. Both had succumbed to the heavy strains imposed upon them by the consequences of her husband's conduct.

He had gone abroad and stayed there for some years after her death, his whereabouts being known to no one but his lawyers, Mr. Bright and Mr. Gorman, who kept the secret well. They in the meantime exerted themselves to the utmost to set his affairs straight, and at

last had the satisfaction of being able to tell him that, after paying all demands, a few thousand pounds had been saved for him from the wreck. They had also made that strange agreement with Mr. Duchesne, which provided the possibility of Lord Texworth or his son being restored some time to their family home. Mr. Gorman, indeed, had thought this clause in the agreement a foolish one, and would have preferred the screwing a few thousand pounds more out of Mr. Duchesne. But Mr. Bright, who had served Lord Texworth's father, and whose father had served Lord Texworth's grandfather, clung earnestly to the belief that Lord Texworth would yet retrieve his fallen fortunes. He had known him from childhood, and he had faith in the natural earnestness and strength of his character, though the latter had failed him when pitted against the temptations that offered for retrieving his first losses by the same means that had brought them about.



Mr. Gorman had to give in to what he thought the "quixotic sentiments of his colleague."

Lord Texworth returned from the Continent so changed that even Mr. Bright scarcely knew him; grief and remorse had done their work. He then revealed to his lawyers his fixed determination not to make his return known to any of his family or former friends. He had communicated with none of them while he had been away, and they had now nearly all forgotten him. He had sunk down, and the world had run on over his head.

Mr. Bright and Mr. Gorman, though they at first strongly opposed this resolve, finding at length that their remonstrances were unavailing, agreed to keep his secret themselves, and help him to keep it. In furtherance of this, he assumed the name of Stillington, when commencing business in partnership with Mr. Stephenson, who had previously been manager

in a similar house of business, and brought knowledge of trade to supplement on his behalf the very small capital he could command. Mr. Bright, whose faith in Lord Texworth was greater than ever now, advanced as much as was needed, with what he had saved from his client's own fortune, to make a really fair start. And the lawyer's faith proved to be well founded. Besides ability of no mean order, energy that never flagged in its renewed life. Lord Texworth,—now Mr. Stillington,—brought an untiring patience, a never-wearying industry, to bear on the task of repairing his fallen fortunes. This, joined to the practical knowledge and a considerable amount of business acumen of his partner, resulted in a success that exceeded his or his friend's most sanguine hopes. At the end of fifteen years Lord Texworth was again a rich man.

Mr. Bright urged him to resume his place

in society, at least for the sake of his son, whom he still persisted in keeping in ignorance of his real name and position. He emerged temporarily from his obscurity at the time of my marriage, but only so much as was sufficient to convince Mr. Duchesne's lawyer of his identity, when he claimed his right to the repurchase of Texton. He returned then to his solitary life in Doughty Street, when every one who had accompanied him, except his lawyers, supposed that he had gone back to his old retreat in the Bavarian highlands.

I have many times since puzzled myself to think how Lord Texworth succeeded so well in keeping this secret. And the only way in which I have ever been able to account for it is this,—In the first place, he had no relations nearer than uncles and aunts and cousins; and neither their affection nor interest survived his ruin. Some of them did to be sure make

inquiries sometimes of Mr. Bright; but after hearing for three or four years that he was in this place or that place on the Continent, they gradually dropped off even this. They said—and with truth—that if he had any family affection he would write to them. As he did not, they concluded that he did not care about them. The fact of his not caring about them might have caused some distress to his relations and friends if he had continued lord of Texton, but when he was a beggared wanderer, they accepted the fact with resignation. When the report—which was very industriously circulated—got about that he was a croupier at a gaming-table, they decided that the less they knew about him the better. Hearing afterwards that, instead, he was a porter at a railway station, they concluded that they did not want to know anything about him at all; and from this time forth Messrs.

Gorman & Bright were troubled with no more troublesome questions.

Lady Texworth was also an orphan, and without any near relations. Her family, though respectable, was much inferior to her husband's. After her death, her friends and relations adopted the same course of conduct that, later, Lord Texworth's did. The other report, of the death of their only child, materially assisted towards this end. In justice to Mr. Bright, it must be said that he always contradicted all these reports; but as all began to agree that Mr. Bright knew very little more about the matter than they did, his contradictions had no weight. And in justice to him, too, I must say that I believe that in this world there never was a better man, before or since, to keep a secret than Mr. Bright. Particularly I eulogize him with regard to his conduct when Philip came to Crawdour. I praise him for the ingenuity with

which he must have parried the cross questioning of his three fair daughters, Augusta, Julia Grace, and Polly, with regard to the strange youth in whom he took an evident interest. His conduct is above all praise when we remember that he was the father of those three young ladies, and that he knew the stranger youth to be the son and heir of a wealthy nobleman. Had Polly known who Mr. Staunton really was, I doubt that she would have called him the dullest young man she had ever met in her life.

"I allus thought as how he favoured him. It give me a kindly feeling to the young gen'leman from the first, Miss Lilla,—m' lady I mean," said Mat.

"Mamma saw the resemblance at once ; she was quite struck with it the night of that dreadful ball," said Lady Geraldine Landon.

"I am sure I am delighted it has all

happened. I never could get used to that odious Mr. Duchesne at Texton," said the countess.

Mr. Duchesne had no political influence in North Longshire now ; and Lord John Randolph had spent Miss Duchesne's fortune long ago.

"By Jove, Lilla, you've turned up trumps, after all. But who'd have thought it! Stillington, Stephenson & Co!"

"I never disliked Texton, only Mr. Duchesne, Philip. But we have been very happy as we were." I was somewhat nervous about the change.

"We were very happy, and we will be very happy still. It can make no difference, love, whether it be Camden Town or Longshire, so that it is you and me ; we cannot change now."

"I was very happy in Albert Street," I said,

with a little sigh. "Nothing ever to vex me, —except that horrid landlady, and the way she took the tea and sugar."

"There will be no landlady to take our tea and sugar at Texton," said Philip. "Never fear but we shall get on there just as well."

And we did.

So that, after all, I fulfilled my destiny, and made

A GOOD MATCH!

THE END.

LONDON, *April*, 1872.

A

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